

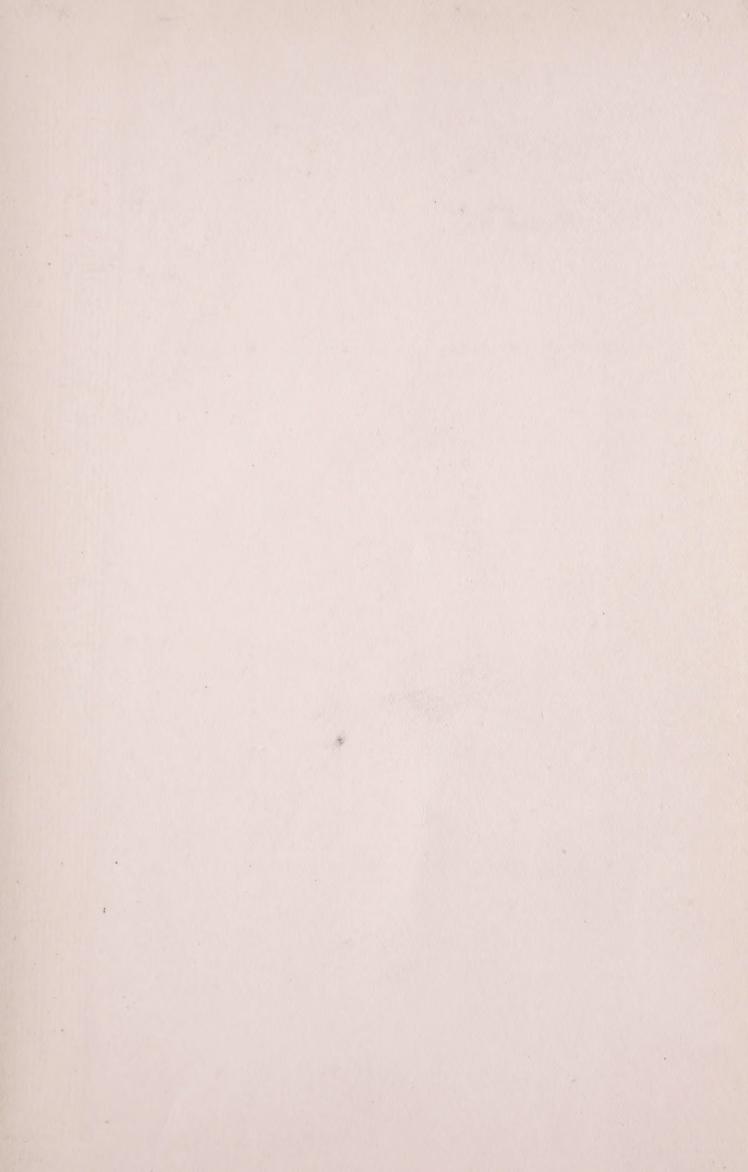


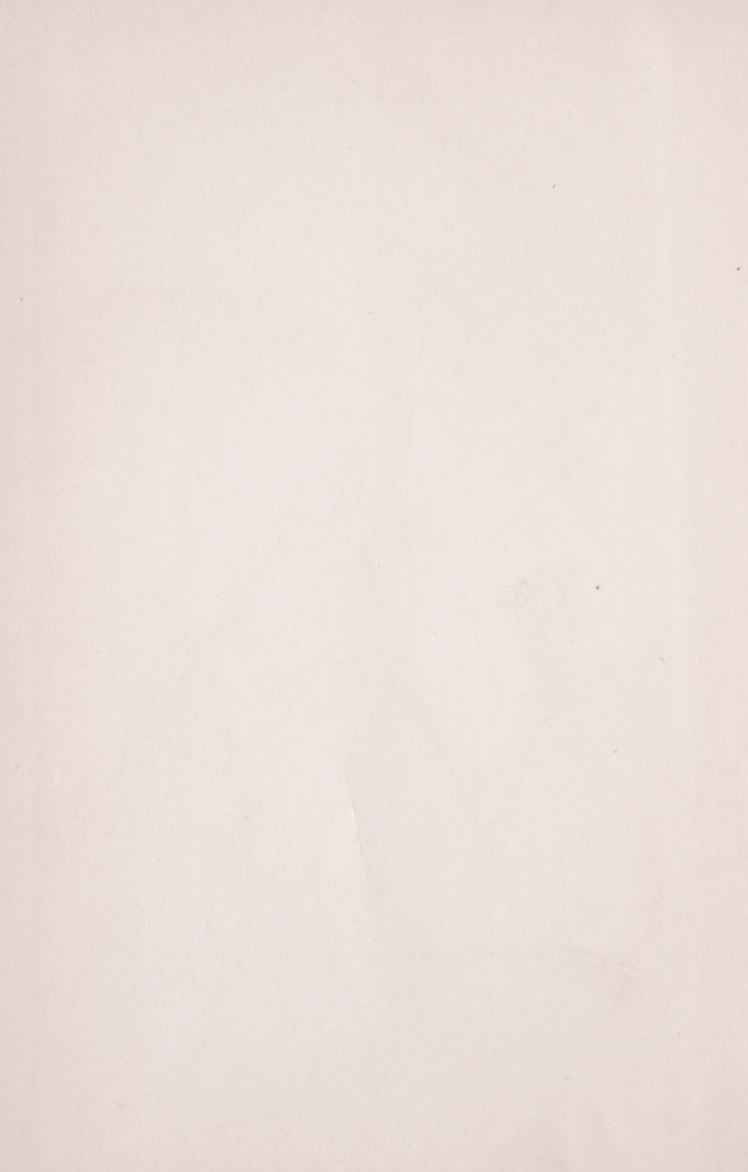
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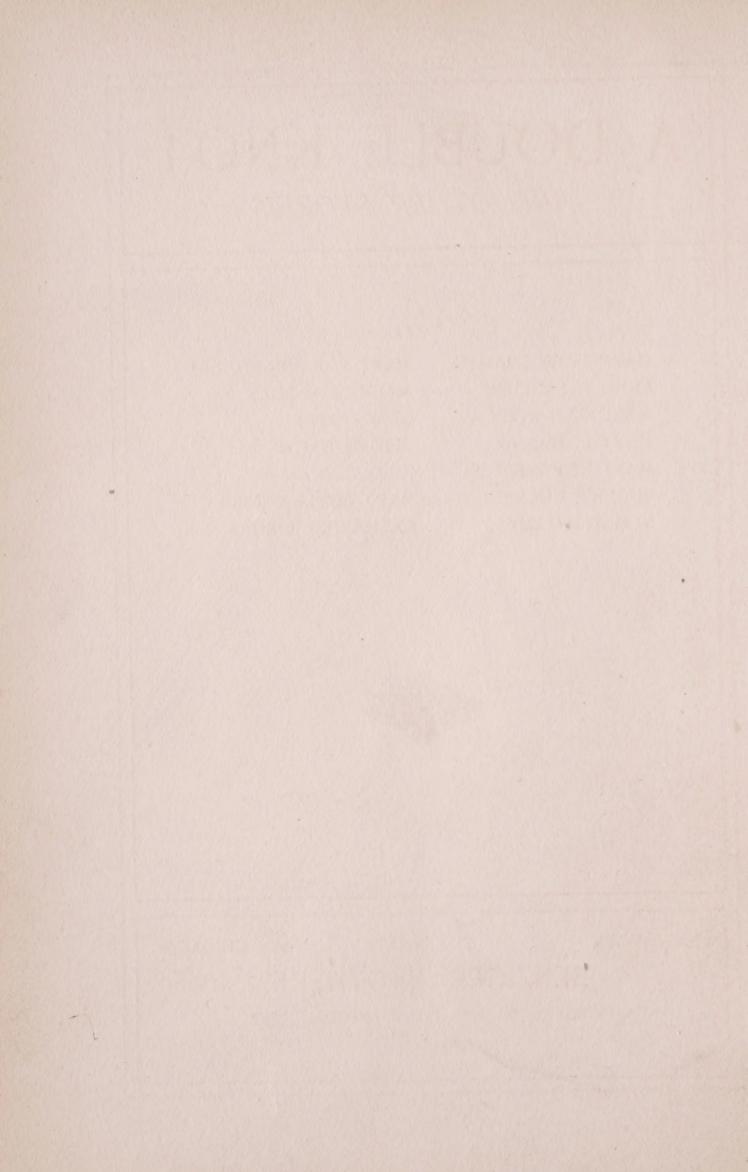
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A DOUBLE KNOT AND OTHER STORIES



A DOUBLE KNOT

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

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A DOUBLE KNOT.

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN.

"I AM going, going by the next train. There's no use in trying to keep me, May."

Pretty Kitty Trevor, with flushed cheeks and flying hair, was down on her knees before a huge trunk, into which she was tossing feminine frippery of the latest date with a reckless disregard of consequences.

"Going where?" gasped Miss Trevor's hostess, sinking down

on the couch that was a chaos of lace-trimmed lingerie.

"To dad! To dad! Oh, I've had a letter from Aunt Allie with such news, such awful, awful news," and Kitty buried her face in the pink silk kimono she was rolling up into a wad and sobbed outright.

"Oh, Kitty! is he so very ill, darling?"

"Worse than ill—oh, a thousand times worse. Worse than dead, almost! He—he—he is going to be married, May, to be married!"

"Married!" echoed Kitty's convent chum, to whom the stately Colonel Trevor had seemed a citadel beyond feminine attack. "Oh, it can't be true! There's some mistake."

"It came straight, it came straight," continued Kitty, brokenly. "Aunt Allie wrote me all about it. It's dad's old sweetheart, Elinor Vane—she is a widow, now, and they met again up at Oakcrest. Oh, why did I ever let him go up to the mountains for his hay fever alone? And dad is a catch for any widow, you know."

"He is indeed," said Miss May, emphatically. "Kitty, it will

be dreadful for you, I am afraid."

"Dreadful doesn't express it. It's—it's simply maddening, May! Think of a stepmother, a horrid, meddlesome stepmother at my age! It would not have been so bad half a dozen years ago, but now, now, when I am just out, and everything was so lovely and I could do exactly as I pleased— Throw me down that mull dress out of the closet, May, and pitch in that lace hat. I can't draw an easy breath until I get to dad and have it out with him."

"Oh, Kitty, take care," cried May, pleadingly. "Let me pack up for you—you are spoiling all your beautiful things."

"Oh, I don't care, I don't care! Jump on the trunk while I lock it. A stepmother ruling the house and servants, leading dear old dad by the nose, guiding me—that's what Aunt Allie said, and I feel like choking her for it—guiding me! And dad in love like a schoolboy, when he's fifty if he's a day. It's so perfectly and entirely ridiculous, May.

"I can't believe it, I can't," continued Kitty hysterically, "though I know it's every word true. But I'll break it up, I'll break it up, before it gets to breach of promise, May. It's dreadful to leave you when we were having such lovely times together,

but I've simply got to take the next train."

And being a young person of decision, Miss Kitty and her trunk were down to meet the Northern Accommodation within an hour.

The graceful little figure, garbed stylishly in brown, caught the critical eye of a young gentleman in the observation car.

"By George! I believe I know that young lady just getting

on the train," he said eagerly.

"Take it easy and finish your cigar, Jack. She is good for two hundred miles at least, and I get off at the next station," said the friend beside him. "I wish you would stop over and look at my horses. Finest stock this side of the mountains, every one says. Just give me a day."

"I can't, I simply can't, Rob, old fellow. I've got to get to mother as fast as steam will take me. I had a letter this morn-

ing that fairly knocked me out of time."

"No bad news, I hope?"

"Bad? Worse than bad. Mad, absolutely mad. You know what mother is, Rob—the sweetest, loveliest, wisest woman in the world, but, 'pon my life, I believe her head is turned at last. She has had suitors by the score since her widowhood and has been deaf to them all, but it seems some old codger, to whom she alludes as a dear old friend, has got on her soft side."

"A stepfather imminent, eh? Pretty rocky lookout for you,

old man, unless you are solid in your own right."

"Oh, I'm solid enough. I don't care for the money," answered Jack, moodily. "But rocky is no name for the matter. It's simply inexpressible. To have some meddlesome old fool lording it in my place—bossing house and servants and stables and kennels, to say nothing of mother herself, who is the gentle, angelic sort, to be tramped over roughshod in the name of duty. New ties, heaven-sent vocation she hints at in her letter to-day. I can hear the canting old hypocrite, who has probably investigated her bank account, pouring his drivel into her ear. But he miscounted badly when he left me out of his calculation. I'll settle him, whoever he is," and the speaker's brown eyes flashed belligerently. "I'll break up his little game. When I got that letter I caught up my grip and started without waiting for breakfast. I'll make things unpleasantly warm for any old fossil who proposes to domicile himself at Homeside for the rest of his life, or my name isn't Jack Sanders."

"Well, I wish you luck one way or another, old chap," said his friend, rising as the train slowed up for his station. "Sorry you can't get off and see my stock. Stop on your way back if you can, and don't be too hard on the old folks, Jack. We'll be there some of these days ourselves." And with a hearty hand-shake the young man sprang from the car, while Mr. Sanders threw away his half-smoked Havana and betook himself through the vestibuled train in a search for the little brown-robed figure he had had in his mind's eye for the last half hour.

He had not far to seek. With a distinct flutter in his heart he recognized the pretty, piquant face that had lingered strangely in his memory for the last six months, bent over a railroad magazine in the parlor car.

"Miss Trevor," he said, pausing beside her.

"Mr. Sanders!" Kitty lifted a bright, startled face. "Where did you drop from? Oh, I am so glad to meet somebody I know."

And the delighted dimple that played around the speaker's

rosy mouth condoned the generalization.

"Somebody" dropped into the seat opposite without further hesitation.

"This is luck I don't deserve," he said. "What are you doing up in this wilderness?"

"I've been visiting—visiting May Morris. You remember May? She was one of the crowd from St. Clare's at that lovely house party at the Dunstan's last Christmas."

"I am afraid I don't recall her," answered the gentleman. "There were several pretty convent girls I remember, but one only has stood out in such vivid brightness as to obliterate all the rest. A certain little golden-haired lady, who wore holly berries and white, and bewitched every one within her reach."

"Ah, you would tell May another story," laughed Kitty, though a soft flush deepened on her cheek. "But it was a lovely week, wasn't it? And you were very nice to me, considering what a little stupid I must have seemed. You see, I had never been out then, and everything was so bewildering and delightful. I have had lots of good times since, but it's never been quite the same."

"Never," echoed Mr. Sanders, with emphasis. "Nothing in my experience has ever been quite the same."

And with this auspicious beginning, the conversation ran on merrily with the flash and sparkle that often tell of depths stirred into new gladness and life below; for the tall, handsome young collegian who had made that first holiday out such a happy one had lingered in Kitty's memory, to the detriment of many others who had since sought her smiles.

As the hours sped on he kept her side while they were borne higher and higher up the mountain into an enchanted land bright with some glamour unknown before. She was going to her father, she explained, who was at Oakcrest for his hay fever. Not for worlds would she have hinted at dear old dad's folly and called forth the younger man's jest and smile.

And Mr. Sanders, by unprecedented good fortune, was bound for the same place, where his mother had her summer cottage—the gentle mother, whose passing madness he would conceal from this merry, laughing girl at any cost. So thrusting all haunting shadows from them, they enjoyed the fleeting hours.

Lunch had been forgotten in their sudden departure, and there was no buffet car on the train, but Jack made a swift sortie at a little wayside station, and came back laden with rich plunder of grapes and peaches and mountain plums, on which they feasted royally while the train swept higher and higher into cloudland, and bore them, quaffing the wondrous elixir of youth and joy, through the pearly gates of the magical dawn, the beautiful dawn that heralds love's perfect day.

The sunset was gilding the mountain top when they reached Oakcrest. Two great coaches were waiting to convey passengers to the hotels, but a coach was a prosaic apotheosis to this beautiful day, when a forest path, shaded by arching oaks, stretched up alluringly to wonderful heights of rose and amethyst and gold.

"Oh, let us walk," said Kitty.

"By all means," was the unhesitating reply, and trunks and checks were confided to the baggage-master, while the young travelers took their way leisurely up the radiant path, glorious with rainbow light.

"It has been the very jolliest day of my life," said Jack. "I

am sorry it is over."

"So am I," answered his companion, with a sudden remembrance of dad and the approaching settlement. "I'd like to travel on forever."

"Suppose we do?" said Jack, eagerly.

"What! Take the cars again?" she asked, with a little laugh.

"No, not the cars; but, but-" they were alone in the rain-

bow radiance, and his words came quick, with the impetuosity of youth. "On another path, Kitty; the path of life, of love. You won my heart last Christmas. You have held it ever since; it is yours now, now and forever."

"Jack! Mr. Sanders! Oh, please don't, not now, not here—"
Kitty, in blushing, in beautiful confusion, had only time to snatch
away the hand he had caught in his ardent, pleading grasp,
when another couple turned the bend of the road, the radiance
of the sunset on their handsome faces and their silver hair.

"Dad!" cried Kitty, with a glance at the stately gentleman.

"Mother!" was Mr. Sanders' breathless word, as the sweetfaced woman caught his eye.

"My little girl," exclaimed Colonel Trevor, as Kitty flung herself, half sobbing, on his breast.

"Jack, darling," murmured his mother in loving surprise.

"This is my son, Colonel Trevor—whom I have been so anxious for you to meet."

"And my dear little daughter, Elinor," said the colonel, his handsome face radiant. "Kitty, this is Mrs. Sanders, my old friend Elinor, who—shall I confess, dear—?"

"Who has promised to be your mother as well as Jack's," said the lady, twining a loving arm around Kitty's waist. "I have always longed for just such a daughter, Arthur."

"And I for just such a sturdy son as this," said the colonel, clapping Jack on the shoulder.

"With all my heart, sir," answered Jack, as his eyes fell on Kitty clasped in his mother's arms, and he shook the "old codger's" hand cordially. "I came up here, I must acknowledge, to break you up if I could, sir—"

"Oh, so did I, dad, so did I," confessed Kitty, between sobs and smiles, "but since it's Jack's mother—"

"And since it's Kitty's father," said Jack, eagerly.

"Ah, I see, you young rogues, I see!" said the colonel, laughing, "you are going to make it a double knot."

A "FORLORN HOPE."

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN.

"THERE be the place, miss." Si Dunn, who ran the one wagonette that comprised the "livery" of Duncansville, slackened rein as he reached the turn in the mountain-road and pointed to an old stone house, rising grim and gray beneath overshadowing oaks, while range after range of forest-crowned heights stretched above and around it. "There be Cameron Place, as you asked for, miss—but ez for getting board thar, I don't think you've any chance at all."

"It will do no harm to try," said the little lady, who was Si's

only passenger this June morning.

She was a dainty little creature, with her wind-blown hair and dancing eyes. Gowned with exquisite simplicity, there was an air about her from her pretty straw hat to the tip of her little French boot, that made her seem a strange and delicate blossom for these rugged wilds.

"No harm, maybe," said honest Si, doubtfully. "Only rough talk ain't pleasant to hear, and though old Squire Cameron never was soft-tongued, he's got harder and rougher since his trouble last year with young Don—"

"Young Don?" queried the little lady softly.

"His son," explained Si, giving his bony mare a loose rein for the climb. "They hadn't but one, and was monstrous sot on him. And no wonder—he was suthin' to brag on—six foot four in his stocking-feet, tall and strong and straight as a mountain pine. The old folks gave him everything first-class, college eddication, tower in Europe—everything he could ask. Didn't spoil him

none, neither—all the folks on the mountain-side agreed to that. He was that pleasant and friendly and nice that everybody tuk to him. He could have gone anywhar this county vote could send him—if 'twas to the White House itself, when the bust-up came and spiled all. Now he has quit these parts forever."

"Forever?" echoed the girl in a low voice.

"Lord, yes. Don Cameron ain't the sort to knuckle down. You see, he met some girl off yonder and lost his heart to her. That warn't much hurt, if he hadn't lost his head, too—clean forgot all the bad blood that has been biling in the Camerons for hundreds of years, and turned Romanist with his sweetheart."

"Romanist! Oh, you mean Catholic, I suppose," said the little lady.

"It's all one, I guess," continued Si, flecking a bluebottle from the mare's ear. "Anyhow, it split things to flinders up here. They say the old man almost went off in an appleplexy—said the sort of rough things a young man can't forgive or forget. Told Don to go and never come back, and Don said he never would until his father called him. Which ain't ever going to be if this mountain-side knows old Angus Cameron. He is grit straight through if it kills him and everybody else. I heern that he won't even have Don's name spoken before him. And he has shut himself up with the old woman in that big house nussing his grief and bitterness and pride and spite."

"Oh, stop, please—here is the gate. What a lovely, lovely place! Oh! I must go in and see if they will take me. Wait here." And Si's passenger leaped lightly to the ground. "I will be back in half an hour—unless the old Squire eats me entirely."

"It is a forlorn hope, I know," continued Miss Elsie Vane, as she opened the garden gate boldly, "but I am a soldier's daughter with the fighting blood of three generations in my veins. And I have managed just as big men before," she added to herself with a little tremulous laugh as she advanced to the porch, where Squire Angus Cameron, grim and gaunt and gloomy as the granite walls of his home, sat smoking his morning pipe.

It took all the pluck of a soldier's daughter to charge such a

sentinel, but strong men had gone down under the battery of Miss Elsie's bright eyes so often that she had the courage of the conqueror.

"Boarders!" echoed the Squire in brusque reply to her request. "Take boarders here? No, we don't. Never did and never will. Don't want either their money or their company." And the speaker's tone and look were enough to rout the most reckless invader.

But Miss Elsie held her ground according to the most approved feminine tactics, charmingly unconscious of the Squire's beetling frown and uncivil speech.

"Oh, I am so sorry," she said plaintively. "It is such a lovely, lovely place. I never saw such beautiful oaks. And your view!" Here words quite failed Miss Elsie. "May I sit down just one minute and look at those mountains?"

And she sank in a pretty girlish way on the stone step at the Squire's feet.

The shaggy brows relaxed somewhat. The pretty invader had touched a weak point.

"Ay, the view is fine. I've heard painter folks say they never saw aught like it. And though I've been looking at it summer and winter this forty year, I never found it twice the same. It's mist and cloud, storm and rainbow, changing ever."

"Wonderful," said the girl softly. "I have never been in the heart of the mountains before. I can understand how their children love them and long for them. I have not been very well," she continued, turning the bright battery of her eyes upon the old man's face. "The doctor ordered quiet and mountain air. But it seems a difficult combination to find. All the hotels are filled with gay, noisy crowds, dancing and frolicking day and night. I thought I would search these lovely heights and see if some kind, good people would take me in."

Again the bright, bewitching eyes flashed upon the Squire, and again the lines gave way as a tender memory twitched at his knotted heartstrings. Twenty years ago he had laid a little maid to rest under the lindens—and—and—the old wound hurt yet.

Something in the bright, uplifted glance recalled the little lass of long ago.

"I dunno," he said, reluctantly. "There ain't a place round here fitting for folks that want quiet and rest. And if you're not well— Mahala," as a thin, sad-faced old woman stepped to the door behind him, "here's a young woman that the doctor has ordered to the mountains. She has come looking here for board."

"Oh, not 'board'!" The pretty appeal of the eyes went straight now to the old mother's heart. "Of course, I can get board anywhere. But I am looking for a home for a few weeks—a sweet, quiet, peaceful home, where I can rest and grow strong."

"You'd not be wanting jigging and junketing like they have at the Mountain House?" asked the old Squire, suspiciously.

"Not a jig or junket," answered Miss Elsie, shaking her head.

"Nor a crowd of young fools blathering around night and morning?"

"No young fools shall come within gunshot of me," laughed the girl gaily.

"Ay, but there will be sweethearting I know," and the Squire's brows met again in a doubtful frown.

"No sweethearting either, on my word and honor. I will be no more trouble than a white kitten if you will take me in." And the winsome glance that went with the words settled matters.

"There's the dimity chamber, Mahala. No one is likely to be asking for it since—since—" The rough voice suddenly paused.

"Ay, ay, so ye be willing, man, I am," said the old lady, tremulously.

And an hour later, Miss Elsie, sitting by a rose-wreathed window, penned a brief epistle.

"Dearest: Have crossed the firing line. Hold possession of the dimity chamber. First redoubt won."

* * * *

Miss Vane was as good as her word. No white kitten could have been less trouble; at the same time no fairy princess disguised

in feline fur could have wielded so instant and powerful a charm. In ten days all Cameron Place was under her spell. Even the portrait of the grim Covenanter ancestor in the great hall seemed to relax its frown as the sunlight streamed through wide-open windows. The quaint, old china vases brimmed with freshly plucked roses. The somber silence was broken with girlish laughter and songs. Light and warmth and color followed the newcomer at Cameron Place even as they follow the sun.

Her Mexican hammock, heaped with gay cushions, lit the dull piazza. Her silken-lined workbasket filled with bright crewels, touched the gloomy hall into light. She could ride; the pride of the stable, broken by the young master three years before, yielded submissively to her rein. She could shoot; her little silver-mounted rifle brought down with unerring aim the hawk that had been a very Herod among the downy innocents in the barn-yard. Most wonderful of all, she could cook, by strange, new, dainty methods that made good Mrs. Cameron open her eyes in wonder.

It was this last accomplishment that conquered the old Squire's grim reserve. Elsie had filled his pipe in a deft fashion, learned long ago from her soldier father. She had sung to him evening after evening the old Scotch ballads he loved. In her white clinging gowns, with roses in her breast and hair, she had been a vision of light and loveliness to the old man's gathering twilight. But it was not until she merrily bore in a smoking dish of "haggis" and placed it before him on the dinner table that the Squire gave way openly and entirely.

"Eh, the Lord guide us, lass, what witch or warlock taught

ye this?"

And Elsie had laughed a rippling laugh of triumph, and felt that the course of "national dishes" at her cooking school had not been all in vain.

But soften as the old folks did to their fair young guest, no word of the dark sorrow that sat at their board and shadowed their home ever passed their lips. Perhaps it was her seeming ignorance of the tragedy that had darkened their lives that made

Elsie's presence so cheering to the old pair, who proudly shrank from their neighbors' gossiping sympathy.

The spell of the "haggis" was still strong upon the Squire in the summer evening as he sat in the deepening twilight smoking the pipe Elsie had filled for him. and listening to her as she sang to the accompaniment of her mandolin. The western gorge was still aglow with the sunset, though the mountain tops were dim and shadowy, and a few faint stars heralded the coming night. As the old man looked at the pretty figure aureoled by the sunset, he thought of the little maid under the lindens and all she might have been to him in these darkened days, with a softening pang in his rough Scotch heart.

Elsie's song had ceased, and with her hands clasped idly over her mandolin she was looking into the gathering shadows. The keen old eyes bent upon her became suddenly aware of a wistful sadness in the sweet young face, usually so bright and glad.

"It's a bit dull for you here with only two old folks. Maybe, as the old woman was saying, I have been over hard in my bargaining with you, lass. You are too young to be shut out from all junketing and sweethearting. I would na have the place given up to a pack of godless rattlebrains, but if there's any one ye'd like to see here in quiet and peace, let him come."

"There is—one," answered the girl, and there was a new light in the eyes uplifted to the old man's face.

"A sweetheart, I'm thinking?" The stern tone was softened wonderfully.

"Yes; the dearest, truest, best of sweethearts," continued the sweet voice tremulously. "But he can not come—I must not let him. Ah, it is a sad story! I have neither father nor mother—I had no one until he came and taught me how sweet it is to love and be loved. But his people do not want me."

"Do not want ye!" It was a good old round Scotch oath that burst from the Squire in his indignation. "Do not want ye, lass! Eh, the feckless fools! An' I'd let the people go to the de'il with their wants if I were yer man."

"Oh, no, no-for he loves them, he loves father and mother

and home more than I can tell. And it would hurt me so to stand between them, to break their hearts—"

"Break their hearts! It's their heads that should be broken with a blackthorn stick, and I'd like the work!" blazed forth the old man wrathfully. "Not to want a lassie like ye—it's I that would give half I am worth to call a girlie like ye my ain."

"Would you?" She was on her knees beside him now, the sweet face radiant. "Then, father—Donald's father—take me for your daughter—for—that is the name and place I ask in your home—in your heart. Forgive me that I have tried to win it by a woman's strategy. Donald said if you knew me you would love me—and so I stole here under my mother's name—" She paused trembling, as the old man's brow blackened and his eyes blazed.

"Ah, do not look at me like that," she pleaded. "You know what you said just now—that you would give half you were worth—"

"Ay, and I hold to it, lass, I hold to it," burst forth the old Squire impetuously, while brow and eyes suddenly cleared and flashed into light even as his own mountain tops at the touch of the sun. "I hold to the bargain, and to ye, be ye what ye may. Donald's sweetheart, are ye? Eh, but I canna blame the lad. Mother, mother, come hear this," he called to the old wife.

"Mother knows all," laughed Elsie. "I told her last night. And Donald," the fair arms wreathed themselves around the old man's neck. "Donald is not very far away, and you said—you know you said—" The brown eyes sparkled roguishly.

"That I'd take a blackthorn stick to them that stood betwixt ye," and old Angus Cameron burst into a laugh that swept away the gloom of years.

"Ah, ye kelpie! ye have me meshed neck and heel. But Angus Cameron never went back on his word yet. Bid the lad come home."

* * * * *

And so the old Covenanter yielded, and the faith came to Cameron Hall with the triumph of Elsie's "forlorn hope."

AT SAINT MALACHI'S.

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN.

It was small but select, the Sanctuary Society at Saint Malachi's. It numbered seven ladies only, six of whom were veterans in the altar service. Indeed, there was a tradition current among the irreverent that active membership in the S. S. conferred immunity from all mortal ills, death and matrimony included. So that when a daring cavalier broke in upon the maiden-band and carried off Miss Mary Grey, all the prestige of a nuptial Mass with surpliced choir did not prevent a certain sense of shock.

And when the gap in the ranks was filled by Daisy Dunn! "Ah, it was a world of change, indeed," as Mrs. Flaherty, who had swept the church under three pastors, declared, with an ominous nod.

Daisy Dunn! a mere slip of a girl, whose short frocks Mrs. Flaherty had washed not half a dozen years ago. Daisy Dunn! whose white hands had never touched any weightier domestic implement than an embroidery needle. Daisy Dunn! whose mother kept five servants and a French maid.

True, Daisy was a goddaughter of Miss Mosely, the president of the S. S., and so had a certain amount of pull. "I'm not saying it's wrong," said Mrs. Flaherty, guardedly, as one who knew the weight of her words in church matters; "but it's quare to see such a bit of a butterfly around the holy altar, very quare."

But "bit of a butterfly" as Miss Daisy was in the outer world, she proved a busy bee in the sanctuary, as even Mrs. Flaherty was forced to confess. Whether it was nature, grace, or simply inborn domesticity, suppressed hitherto by the five servants and French maid, she took to her new duties like a duck to water. The vigil of every feast found her at her post, from which no golf tournament or baseball game or social tea could allure the season's belle. Muffled in a huge gingham apron that effectually concealed the *chic* gown beneath, her pretty golden pompadour tied up in a white handkerchief, thick chamois gloves on her dainty hands, Miss Daisy was ready to scrape candles, dust vases, mend surplices, or polish censers at her senior's command.

It was a busy group gathered to-day in the Sunday-school chapel preparing the Repository for the coming feast.

Palms, potted plants, flowers, vases, candlesticks, were gathered in picturesque profusion for final arrangement, while, poised on a step-ladder at a perilous altitude for a lady of her avoirdupois, Miss Mosely surveyed the situation with the ease of a practised generalissimo who knows the field.

Rumors had gone abroad that the adjoining parish was putting forth unusual efforts this year, and there was unanimous resolve that Saint Malachi's must not be surpassed in its labor of love; so it was with a decisive voice the commanding officer issued her orders.

"Old Mrs. Morton's lilies have just come; set them aside, please, Miss Grace, for a while. The dear old soul always expects to see them directly in front of the tabernacle. I will have to ask you, Miss Ellen, to mend the rent in Father Flynn's alb, or he will put his foot into it to-morrow, sure. And what is that you say, Miss Rose? Fenton has sent only a dozen palms! I put in my order for three dozen fully a month ago! He must fill it or lose Saint Malachi's custom. Florists really seem to lose all conscience at times like these. Let us see if we have all the candlesticks ready—ten, twelve, fourteen— My dears, we've forgotten the Calvert candelabra."

A dismayed pause followed this announcement. Then Miss James, who had simply stepped in to assist, ventured the flippant suggestion:

"Oh, cut them out this year, Miss Mosely, they're so big."

"Cut them out," echoed Miss Mosely, in a shocked tone. "My dear, I wouldn't dare. They were presented to the church fifty years ago by old General Calvert, and every great-grandchild of his—and they are legion—who will bend a knee at the Repository to-morrow will want to know how, where, and why those candelabra have disappeared."

"Let me get them," said Miss Daisy, cheerfully.

"Get them, child! You couldn't lift one of the six branches. Father Flynn keeps them locked up in the house. He told me he had put them out in the dining-room for me. I will ask Brother Bernard to bring them over later. Meantime, if you wouldn't mind giving them a little rubbing up where they stand

"It's a job we all dodge, Miss Daisy. The six-winged cherubim on those candlesticks have to be scrubbed semi-yearly—from angels of darkness into angels of light. Keep on your gloves or you will be beyond the help of a manicure for weeks," she warned, as, all undaunted, Miss Daisy tripped gaily away to her task.

"Stretch out in that big armchair of mine, Tom, and make yourself comfortable," said Father Flynn to the tall, young University man, who had slipped down to spend Easter week with "Uncle Larry," and recuperate, after a close call from pneumonia, in this softer air.

"Old Biddy is out, like the rest of the women, after an Easter bonnet, but she has put a bit of a girleen in her place that you can call on if you want anything like a glass of milk or a cup of tea. It's at home, you are, remember, my boy, at home."

"Thank you, Uncle Larry, though home is a word that seldom enters my vocabulary just now."

"I know it, my lad, I know it," said the old priest, tenderly.

"It's a hard, cold, lonely road you've walked since your poor mother, God rest her, left ye ten years ago. But since you won't

follow my track, as I once hoped, Tom, the next best thing is to look up a good girl and make a home for yourself."

"Too heroic a measure, uncle. Girls don't like me, and I

don't think I like girls."

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Uncle Larry, shaking his head. "That's heresy, or next to it, Tom, my lad. Holy Orders or matrimony is Mother Church's teaching to the men. If you don't like one sacrament take the other, but it's a poor sort of a Catholic that balks at both. But you're half sick now, and it's no time for preaching. Don't forget to take the milk, and, though I am a teetotaler myself, there's a drop of something stronger for weaklings on my sideboard if you should need it, lad. You want bracing up, body and soul, just now."

And with this kindly parting word, Father Flynn betook himself to his confessional, while Mr. Tom Bryan freed himself from collar and necktie, loosened the shirt button from his well-shaped throat, and sank back in the depths of the pastoral easy chair with the pipe and book that had so far supplanted for him all feminine charms.

Spring came early to Saint Malachi's. Already the great oaks that shaded the grounds were veiled in tender mists of green, the crocuses that fringed the box-bordered garden were in yellow bloom; from the chapel choir came the silvery voices of the children practising the Easter chants. Alleluia, they sang, and the note of joy seemed echoed from the wakening earth, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The listener dropped the treatise on "Criminal Psychology" that he brought down to study during his holiday, and clasping his hands over his head, lay back on Uncle Larry's shabby cushions and gave himself up to unusual reverie.

Bare of all womanly touch as was the dim old room, a paternal spirit pervaded its austerity with a homely charm. There was a pile of Sunday-school books, a worn catechism on the desk, a lot of small shoes, left for gratuitous distribution, in a corner; a half-munched apple under the big sofa, dropped by some little sinner called to pastoral judgment, while over the old

colonial mantel, with its broken marble pillars, hung an exquisite copy of Raphael's Madonna, that gave life and color and glow to the bare monastic walls.

The sweet eyes of the Virgin Mother seemed to rest upon the young man with a tenderness that recalled to him the loss that had darkened his early youth. All since had been the cold, grave, academic life in which he had won brilliant place and name, but love and home were not for him—they were beyond his student reach. A strange, new sense of self-pity stirred his heart. It had been a hard five weeks' struggle in the hospital, with death perilously near. He closed his eyes with a dull sense of weakness and weariness, and was startled to find his lashes wet with unshed tears.

"Good Lord, I must be in for brain softening," he muttered, half angrily. "Uncle Larry is right. I want a bracer indeed, when I go all to pieces like this." And, starting to his feet, he pulled the old-fashioned bell-rope with an impatient hand.

But though the summons clanged harshly through the house, there was no response. Again Mr. Bryan rang, and again, then with the natural irritability of the masculine convalescent, descended the stairs in no friendly mood to old Biddy's delinquent substitute.

Led by the sound of a fresh, rich voice, he pushed open the dining-room door and faced a young person polishing a pair of heavily branched silver candlesticks with an unusual amount of vigor, while she softly hummed an accompaniment to the children's Easter hymn.

There was a rustic flush on the velvet cheek, and a smudge on the pretty patrician nose that told the six-winged cherubim supporting the silver branches had taxed unaccustomed powers. But Mr. Bryan, as he had said, was not wise in womankind.

"My good girl," he began, "didn't you hear that bell?"

The good girl's start and stare were blank and bewildered. Such an introductory address from a collarless stranger, haggard in face and hollow of eye, was a shock, to say the least of it.

"I rang three times," continued the intruder, with the patience of long suffering, "but I suppose you don't know what a bell means. I want a glass of milk, and please be quick about it."

"You want a- a- a- I don't understand," faltered the

"good girl."

"A glass of milk-milk-m-i-l-k-milk," said Mr. Bryan,

losing patience at such stupidity, "milk from a cow."

The violet eyes fixed upon the speaker began to dilate. This must be either madness or intoxication; never in all her twenty years of life had man looked or talked so in her presence before. And the door was closed behind her and Father Flynn was out!

"I want a glass of milk," repeated the intruder, "and that

bottle of brandy on the sideboard there behind you."

"Don't—don't come any nearer." The speaker's voice trembled, but the soldier's spirit in her rose valiantly. "Don't dare come a step nearer, or—" she grasped the silver cherubim in reckless disregard of cost or weight—"I'll throw this candlestick at you, you coward!" The violet eyes were blazing lightning now. "Walk right out of this room, or—"

"Sure, what is it you're wanting, sur?" and a rosy, rotund person appeared at the door, tray in hand. "I had me hands all black wid polishing the stove, as Aunt Biddy tould me, when the bell rang, an' I couldn't come at wanst. But I brought the milk, as his riv'rence bade me, and, shure, Miss Daisy, isn't this the dhirty work for pretty hands like yours—lave me to finish it, darlint."

There was a pause—an absolutely breathless pause—in which the two late antagonists stared at each other speechlessly. Revelation burst upon the daughter of Eve first.

"You—you are Father Flynn's 'Tom,'" gasped Miss Daisy, who had heard about the expected arrival of her brother's brilliant class-mate, a woman-hater on whom Dick had warned her it was useless to expend any feminine ammunition.

"And you—you?" Mr. Bryan's wits, although veritable searchlights on all sociological problems, were still in a hopeless daze.

"I am Dick Dunn's sister, Daisy. Perhaps you have heard of me," laughed the lady, roguishly.

Heard of her! Heard of this matchless queen of hearts! Mess room and campus had echoed with her name and fame—even to his averted student ears. Mr. Bryan clutched at his throat in a vain effort to conceal its reckless dishabille and wished he could sink quietly into some convenient rat-hole.

"You see," explained Miss Daisy, continuing to whisk off the disguising kerchief from her golden pompadour as she spoke, "I am a member of the Sanctuary Society, and came in here to clean the candlesticks for the Repository to-morrow, and, and—" as she summed up the situation, she broke off in irrepressible laughter. "Oh, what a joke it will be on both of us—what a dreadful joke! Dick will keep it up to his dying day. Don't tell, Mr. Bryan, don't let's ever tell."

"We won't," he answered, in a tone of great relief, while "Nonie," who had altogether missed the point of the scene on which she had intruded, stared from one to the other with cheering stupidity. "You're—you're a trump, Miss Daisy. I mean that you're—you're the most delightfully sensible girl I ever met. Shake hands, will you, on that proposition? We'll never tell."

And they never did.

When Father Flynn came in an hour or two later, the sixwinged cherubim had been changed from dark angels to spirits of dazzling light, but it was by Nonie's vigorous hands, while for once the youngest and fairest of the S. S. was a derelict to Sanctuary duty.

Ripples of youthful laughter came from the rectory parlor, where Miss Daisy had brewed a milk punch for the interesting invalid after her father's time honored recipe, and Tom—the cold, the clever, the brilliant, the woman-hating Tom—was her unresisting victim forever.

"Eh, God bless us!" murmured Uncle Larry to himself, as he looked from his favorite nephew to the flower of his flock, and wondered at the light and glow that kindled the pale young student face, a while ago so sad and weary. "I couldn't ask anything better for either of them. But," he added aloud, with a paternal twinkle in his eye, "isn't this a sudden conversion, Tom, a wonderfully sudden conversion?"

"It is," answered Tom, hastily. "Uncle Larry was lecturing me this afternoon on some unorthodox opinions of mine, Miss Daisy. I retract them all, uncle. You were right, altogether right. And I may call to-morrow, Miss Daisy?"

And he called the morrow, and the next morrow, and the next.

And before the crocuses in Uncle Larry's garden bloomed again, there was another nuptial Mass with surpliced choir in old Saint Malachi's, and the six-winged cherubim shone in all their glory upon the high altar that the Sanctuary Society had decked with loving hands as the "bit of a butterfly" fluttered from their maiden ranks forever.

A BRIER ROSE.

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN.

A LIGHT breeze stirred the white muslin curtains. The breath of the budding roses came into the quaint old parlor, where the high-nosed Peytons of four generations frowned down from the wainscoted walls upon Angus Grafton, leaning against the tall mantel-shelf, his strong, grave face pathetic in its tenderness, its perplexity, its pain.

For Dolly, pretty brown-eyed Dolly, whose tip-tilted nose defied all the traditions of her race, was standing before him in one of those mutinous feminine moods that defy masculine comprehension.

"It is for the last time, Dolly," he said, with an odd catch in his deep voice.

"You have said that three times before," answered Dolly, mischievously.

"I know it," he continued, and his tone grew steadier and stronger. "I have been an absolute fool for the past six months. But I have determined to take my folly in hand, and—and—master it."

There was a ring in the words that an older and wiser woman would have heard and heeded. But naughty Dolly only filliped a rose-leaf from her ruffled gown.

"We must understand each other, Dolly-"

"Oh, we couldn't," she answered, quite decisively. "At least I couldn't, I know. Understanding things always made my head ache, even at school. Sister Angela said it was because my mind had never been trained to think."

"Then why didn't she train it?" asked Dr. Grafton, a faint

smile flickering over his face as he realized how very correct was Sister Angela's diagnosis.

"She tried," answered Dolly, "but it was no use. Aunt Betty had let me grow my own way too long—like her brier roses. She can't train them up the porch, tie them as she will. Sister Angela might have done something, but she had not time. Uncle Dick only left me at the convent a year. He was afraid that I would turn Catholic if he kept me there any longer. And perhaps "—there was a curious softening of the roguish face—"I might. I used to sit in the chapel in the evening and listen to the nuns singing in the choir, and think—and think—O dear!" said Dolly, dimpling into her naughty self again. "I often wish I was a nun now, with a pretty ruffled cap like Sister Angela's, and no need to bother about hats and gowns."

Dr. Grafton laughed outright. Catholic as he was himself, the picture of Dolly in conventual robe seemed an absurdity. And yet, even as he laughed, he realized that Sister Angela's efforts had not altogether failed. There had always been an indefinable charm about Aunt Betty's brier rose that had told of an uplifting touch. He had been conscious of a better, truer nature under Dolly's most tormenting moods. It was this intangible, elusive spell that had held him captive for the last six months at the little coquette's feet.

"You could never be a nun, Dolly," he said, softly. "But—but—some day, when you are all my own, I know that you will believe and hope as I do—"

"I don't promise," answered Dolly, with a wilful shake of her curls. "I don't promise anything."

"You forget," he said, gravely. "There is one thing you have promised."

"No," persisted Dolly, like the naughty little brier rose she was. "I have not promised anything. I told you that I cared for you, and I do. I always like people that like me, and I tell them so, because I don't want to hurt their feelings."

"And—and"—the speaker's lips had grown white—"you mean you tell all men the same thing?"

"Oh, no! Not all," answered Dolly, demurely.

"And you wish me to understand that you have made me simply a puppet and a plaything with the rest?"

"I never said anything like that, I am sure," replied Dolly, in a much aggrieved tone. "I've told you twenty times I liked you."

"Liked me, Dolly!"

"Well, loved you, then," corrected Dolly, in the softest of little whispers. "And you said that was enough."

But there was no answering smile in the grave, stern face to

which she lifted her bewitching eyes.

"No, not enough," her companion answered, in a new, hard voice, "not enough when you tell twenty men the same pretty lie. Listen, Dolly! I told you I had taken my folly in hand. If I can not bind you, I can at least master myself. Put your hand in mine, promise me in all truth and earnestness that you will be my wife, or else—" He paused as if he could not finish the sentence.

"Or else what?" asked Dolly, holding up her pretty head defiantly at this master tone.

"Else there must be an end to this maddening mockery. I

shall leave you forever, Dolly."

A cold chill like a frost breath went through the heart of the little brier rose; then she put out all her pretty prickles to hide the shiver and the pang.

"Ah, well! I'll try to bear it," she said, with a light little

laugh. "Good-by, Dr. Grafton."

"Good-by," he answered, taking the hand she held out to him and nearly crushing it for a moment in his own. "Good-by, and

God forgive you, Dolly."

Groping, like one almost blind, for his hat and cane, he turned from the room, leaving Dolly breathless with pain and dismay under the simpering portrait of another Miss Dorothy Peyton, who had played as recklessly with men's hearts and hopes one hundred years before.

"The horrid man!" gasped Dolly at last, shaking her pretty pink-tipped fingers. "He fairly crushed my hand—and—and—

how white and queer he looked." Then she dimpled into roguish smiles again. "He will be at the ball to-night, I know, just the same." And the little witch, sure of her spell, tripped gaily upstairs to put fresh ribbons in the white gauze gown which Angus Grafton liked the best of all her dainty fripperies.

And a very fairy queen she looked as she floated through the dance that evening, her golden curls perked up in a jaunty coronet on her graceful head, her fluttering fan a scepter whose sway none dared dispute.

Never had she flashed and sparkled and dimpled more bewitchingly upon her train of admirers, who were ready to fight for a smile, a word, a glance.

But there was one who did not come; one whom her slightest whisper had hitherto lured from book, desk, fireside, from all but the path of duty, to follow her dancing feet. And as the merry hours sped on, and still that strong, grave face failed to look upon her triumph, Dolly became deadly weary of it all, and felt that foppish young Dr. Herbert was the only sensible man in the room, when at the stroke of twelve he stopped beside her to say "good night."

"Awful sorry I have to leave so soon, Miss Dolly, but I must be on hand now for double work."

"Double work!" echoed Dolly, vaguely.

"Yes; of course you know Grafton leaves to-night. Foolish thing for a man like him to volunteer, I think. But I suppose that last call for surgeons at the front stirred all the heroic blood in him. I intended to see him off—but—by George, there goes his train now!" And over the sweet strains of the Strauss waltz rose the shrill shriek of the locomotive as it tore its way through the midnight darkness without.

"You mean that—he—has—gone!" panted Dolly, clutching her little fan as if it could uphold her in a dissolving universe.

"Gone? Why, yes—surely he said good-by to you?" and the young doctor looked at her curiously.

"Oh, yes; of course," answered Dolly, feeling that all her world was gazing at her through those wondering eyes, and, rising

to the situation as only the born coquette can, though lights and flowers and dancers seemed whirling in a dizzy circle around her. "He said good-by this morning. I did not know he was going quite so soon. Ah, this is your waltz, I believe, Mr. Lawson," and Dolly bent a bewitching smile on the newcomer at her side. "Would you mind sitting it out in the conservatory? And if you will get me one of those lovely little pink ices downstairs, I will hide away under that big oleander and wait for it." And while Jack Lawson went for the pink ice Dolly got the five minutes to herself that she needed to steady her heart and brain and nerves, so that none might see that she had played too recklessly with a strong man's love—and lost it.

* * * * * *

It was a deadly August day. A brassy sun was scorching the little Southern seaport, whose tropic languor had been galvanized into unwonted life by the battle thrill quivering through the land. And now the bloody tide from San Juan and Santiago was rolling back upon this friendly coast. The white sands were alive with moving troops, wagons, hospital attendants. Transports laden with the sick, wounded, and dying were unloading their ghastly freight at the narrow wharves; doctors and nurses were hurrying from all parts of the Union to help and to save.

In the long stretch of barracks that had been hastily transformed into a hospital lay Angus Grafton, trembling between life and death. Shattered with shot, wasted with fever, he was but a shadow of the stalwart man whose heroic service was on the lips of every soldier in his regiment.

But no echo of this grateful praise could reach the doctor's ear now. For more than five weeks he had lain in a dull stupor, broken only by faint gleams of consciousness, during which he had seemed wearily indifferent to life or death.

"He has a chance still," said the keen-eyed old surgeon, who watched with especial interest over his brave young confrère, "a fighting chance still. But he must be roused to make the fight. It would be well to send for some of his people—mother, wife, sister, sweetheart—anybody very near and dear to him. This is no

place for visitors, I know, but we must save a fine fellow like Graf-

ton at any cost."

And the clear-eyed Sister who, with many others, had been summoned from other fields of duty to hospital service, looked through the pockets of the tattered blood-stained uniform for some letter or paper to guide her. She found no word, no line, only the surgeon's notebook, a little Vade Mecum, and a velvet case from which laughed a fair, sweet, roguish face that Sister Angela—knew.

* * * * *

Drifting through troubled dreams, clouded by dimly remembered horrors of blood and carnage, Angus Grafton became suddenly aware of a faint breath of perfume that seemed to hold captive his wandering spirit.

What was it? The dulled brain stirred feebly with the question, and memory seemed to thrill with a waking pain. A rose! the breath of a brier rose! Ah, he was dreaming death-dreams, he thought, opening his heavy eyes wearily.

No. There upon the little table at his side stood a great white bowl, fairly brimming with bloom and fragrance. Roses, brier roses, thriving and sweet and fresh—the wayward blossoms that would not be bound or tied! And into the hollow, burning eyes that gazed upon the flowers there welled two great tears that told how weak the strong, proud man had grown.

"O look, Aunt Betty, look! He sees, he knows! Oh, I can't wait another minute. I'll have to speak to him," and a little white-robed figure fluttered out from the screening curtain behind the cot—and Dolly!—was it Dolly or some mocking phantom in her shape? She was down on her knees beside his pillow, holding his wasted hands, sobbing out between smiles and tears: "Angus, dear Angus, it is I—I—your own Dolly—your little brier rose! Sister Angela sent me word that you needed me—and—I came with Aunt Betty this morning. Oh, won't you try to—to live—for me, Angus? I have loved you all the time. I have cried every night since you left me. Don't leave me again, Angus; don't leave me again."

And at that sweet, low cry the shadow of Death seemed to vanish, and the light of life kindled the pale, wasted face.

"Never again," came the faint whisper through the parched

lips. "My Dolly—never again."

And then Dr. Grafton proceeded to get well in a way that broke all professional records, and there was a wedding in the old Virginia home in October that eclipsed anything the four generations of high-nosed Peytons had ever witnessed before.

The roses—the wayward brier roses—defied all the laws of Linnæus by blooming under the very nose of Jack Frost for this auspicious occasion. They garlanded the rooms, they decked the table, they wreathed the cake, and—Dr. Grafton would have it so in spite of all fashion's protests—they crowned with their winsome, blushing blossoms the happy little bride.

THE BLACK SHEEP'S CHRISTMAS.

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN.

HE was a black sheep—a very black sheep, indeed. If there were a white spot upon him no human eye could descry it. Shaggy Dan (he had half a dozen sobriquets equally as expressive) had always been a black sheep, kicked and cuffed, cursed and hounded; a sheep without owner or shepherd, without pasture or fold.

There had been one brief interval in this long, dark record; an interval certainly not of Shaggy Dan's choosing.

A dozen or more years ago, when, in a distant city, Jim Finney had nearly done for him in a drunken brawl, he had been taken to a hospital and nursed back to life. It had been a close call, for Jim's blow had been a deadly one. For days, weeks or months, Shaggy Dan never knew which, he had lain like one in a half-waking dream.

And now like a dream the memory came back to him of the spotless ward, the snowy bed, the gentle, black-robed figure watching over him night and day. In his wildest fever her touch could calm, her voice could soothe him. Sister, they called her—Sister Something, he could never quite catch the other name—but with a civility born of his weakness, he had substituted "Lady Sister" for the unknown title. For weeks he had been the "Lady Sister" spoor boy" (he was but twenty then), doomed, as the doctors believed, either to death or hopeless idiocy. But skill and patient care had conquered, and slowly but surely the veil had lifted from his mind, and he had come out of the shadow through which Lady Sister had led him, as a little child. As a child she had talked to him, sung to him, prayed over him in those dim shadowy days when, shorn of all manhood's strength and cunning, he lay at her sweet

mercy; days whose memories came back to him blurred and broken even in his darkest moods.

The soft touch upon his brow, the low whisper in his ear, the dim gleam of the night lamp flickering upon the white wall, where hung the picture of the Shepherd carrying home the lost sheep, and the sweet, pale, worn face, with its dark bright eyes, watching him night and day. Like a dream it all had passed, and "Lady Sister" with it, for before he was well she had been taken ill herself, worn out with hospital work, so it was said, and had been sent off to lighter duty in another city.

And Shaggy Dan had gone forth in renewed strength only to turn into wilder, darker ways, wandering at his reckless will through bog and mire and thorn, until at last the strong hand of the law had been laid upon him; thrust behind prison bars he had been held for months, all the evil passions within him smouldering under the embers of a sullen despair.

Shaggy Dan was at his blackest, perhaps, on this special Christmas Eve. Seated on the iron cot in his cell he listened to the sounds of mirth and merriment that penetrated even the grim walls and casements of his prison—to song and carol and shout, the gay laughter of happy children, the chiming of bells, the blare of horns, the cries of street fakirs and venders—all the glad notes that made up the joyous holiday chorus without. And a fiercer, wilder resentment awoke in his breast at the thought that he was debarred from all the rough pleasures the season had once held for him—the coarse revel, the rude feasting, the mad carouse, that to this poor earthling were all that Christmas brought to mind.

"Here's a Christmas gift for you, 24," called Dwight, the turn-key, thrusting a small package through the grated door. "Step up lively and get it, for I've just forty more to give round before seven o'clock to-night. They are from the Ladies' Mission."

Dan shambled forward and took the package held out to him. Tied with a bit of blue ribbon were two pairs of knit socks, two pocket handkerchiefs, and a tract entitled, "Sinner, Awake!"

The "Sinner" growled out a graceless oath.

"You're a nice one," said Dwight, his severity somewhat tempered by the holiday spirit. "Maybe it will be more to your taste to hear the warden has ordered a big dinner for to-morrow. Turkey and fixings for all hands."

"Rum?" queried Dan, an eager blink in his deep-set eyes.

"Rum!" echoed Dwight, "not much! The warden ain't a loonatick outright. Hot coffee and plenty of it is all we serve."

"Curse them all!" snarled Shaggy Dan, as Dwight kept on down the dusky corridor. "A throwing their Christmas gifts and Christmas dinners at us—in a hole like this! 'Sinners, Awake!' Ain't much need to pitch that to me. Wake! I'm pretty wide awake, as they'll find out before long.

"Let's try it agin," and, casting a keen glance through the grating of his door into the deserted corridor, he drew from his pocket a bit of iron, a great nail that with infinite care and patience had been bent and flattened and shaped.

"I didn't gradooate with the sharpest cracksmen in Chicago fur nothing. It was pretty night right yesterday. Let's see how it goes now." And bending down he stealthily inserted the rude tool in the keyhole. A blasphemous cry of triumph burst from his lips. "It works! by —— it works now," with another oath. "I'll be out of this hole to-night. And—I'll have my Christmas or swing for it."

* * * * *

Sister Seraphine was putting her last touches to the Christmas altar.

A beautiful altar it was, as it stood all decked for the midnight Mass, loaded with palms and evergreen, the tall white tapers in their gorgeous candelabra rising amid glowing poinsettia blossoms, above the spotless altar linen and filmy lace.

Sister Seraphine's little wasted frame was thrilling with simple, loving pride, for bare and austere as were the convent school-rooms and corridors, the little chapel of Our Lady of Mercy was rich in ex-votos from loving pupils, who thus testified their affectionate devotion to their convent home.

And Sister Seraphine, who had been sacristan for nearly a dozen years, since failing health had necessitated her retirement from the more active work of her Order, had a tender personal knowl-

edge of every donor and every gift.

"We must have all our beautiful things out to-night," she had said to Sister Claudia, her sturdy white-veiled assistant in the little sacristy. "The lovely altar cloth of drawn work, that Lola Martinez sent us from Mexico. Poor, wild little Lola! she died five years ago-may God give her rest. And the lace that was Nellie Jessop's bridal veil; dear child, she had a fancy to keep it spotless forever on Our Lady's altar. And the vestments that Marie Bonville sent us from Paris as a thank-offering on the birth of her boy. And Mother said we could have the chalice set with Angie Loraine's jewels, that her father gave us when Angie joined the Poor Clares. Dear children! We must pray for them all tonight. Ah, Claudia, when we think of the cold stable and manger, how sweet it seems to have so beautiful a resting-place for the divine Babe! And then"—Sister Seraphine paused to catch her breath painfully, while the soft dark eyes shone like stars, "it is the last time I will dress the Christmas altar, Claudia. Next year there will be some one else."

"God bless ye, don't be saying the likes of that," said honest Claudia huskily.

"Ah, you know it, and I know it, and the doctor knows it," answered Sister Seraphine brightly. "And after all, Claudia, dear, is it not for the best? Of what use have I been for the past ten years, but to put candles and flowers at our dear Lord's feet? No strength to nurse, no health to work, no voice to teach."

"Whisht, now, whisht, or I'll be losing me temper this holy Christmas time," said Sister Claudia. "Don't every wan of us know that ye've done wurruk enough in yer day for forty wimmen? Tin years in that City Hospital in Chicago, a nursing all the villyuns and vagabones of the town! It was that kilt ye up entirely."

"Ah, those were good years, happy years!" said little Sister

Seraphine. "So much to do for suffering bodies, for sinful souls. There was one, Claudia, the last I ever nursed, of whom I think so often. A great, big, black-haired, black-eyed young fellow; wild and wicked indeed, but, oh, so pitifully ignorant, untaught, neglected! He had brain trouble for weeks, and I had charge of him. No one else could manage him, but with me he was like a lamb, a poor, lost lamb. I was taken ill before he recovered, and then I was sent East. And I suppose he drifted back again into his evil ways. But it is one of the regrets of my life that I had to leave him before his mind quite cleared. Poor Dan! If I had not broken down I might have held, guided, saved this lost sheep.

"But here I am keeping you chattering over my vestments, when you have other work to do down-stairs. Lift down the heavy box with the chalice and ciborium, Claudia, dear—and then you can

go, and God bless you for your loving help."

When all was done at last in the little sacristy, and Sister Claudia had gone to other duties, Sister Seraphine turned into the sanctuary, and kneeling down on the altar step prayed as such sweet souls pray. How long she knelt there before her Christmas altar she did not know, but at length the sound of the community bell roused her, and she rose to go. But before she turned toward the chapel door, she stepped back for a final glance at her little sacristy, to see that nothing had been forgotten, that robe and vestment and sacred vessel all were prepared for the midnight feast.

And then, then for one awful moment her brave heart stood still. Revealed by the dim taper of gas she had left burning, stood a huge, hulking black figure, his sacrilegious hand resting on the jeweled chalice itself.

Frozen with horror, she could neither move nor speak, but stood, white, mute, motionless under the intruder's startled gaze. For an instant there was a wild, murderous gleam in the deep-set eyes: then they widened into terrified amaze, and the robber fell back with a shiver against the sacristy wall.

"Lady Sister!" he gasped. "It's—it's Lady Sister!"

"Dan!" Like a revelation was the flash that kindled Sister Seraphine's numb mind and heart and soul. "Dan Devlin! Merciful God! My poor boy!"

"Don't, don't," he cried hoarsely, holding up his hand as if to ward off a blow, "don't, Lady Sister, don't speak—don't pray over me again. Don't—look at me—don't ——"

"Are you afraid of me—of your old nurse—your Lady Sister, Dan?"

"Afeerd? No—but I can't, can't bear it. I'm a devil—I'm worse than a devil now! I've busted out of jail, I've come here to rob, to murder. I'd a done it! yes, I would a done it in another minute if I had not seen your face——"

"My poor, poor boy!"

"Don't ye call me that, don't," the speaker tugged wildly at his neck cloth. "It chokes me to hear it. I give up! There!" he flung a heavy iron spike on the floor at her feet. "That's all I've got. I give up, Lady Sister! I won't tech nobody. Call the cops and let 'em drag me back to that hell whar I belong."

A thousand thoughts seemed to flash instantaneously into Sister Seraphine's mind. It was one of those moments which are beyond the grasp of Time. Wisdom, prudence, justice, called sternly for the punishment of this transgressor. But was there not One, the Judge of heaven and earth, who bent to write on the sands when the stoners of the sinner demanded the letter of the law?

And to-night from the Christmas altar, the Christmas manger, there came not the voice of Justice, but the voice of Love. And that voice rose supreme over the clamor in sweet Sister Seraphine's heart.

"Dan," she paused breathlessly, "I saved you once—I must save you again. Go, go as you came. Go to some far-off place, where you can be free, where you can be good, where you will never—never—do anything like this again. Remember, I believe in you, I trust you to live hereafter—as—as—my

poor boy should. Quick, for some one is coming. In God's name, Dan, go!"

He stared at her for one moment as if he were dazed—then with the quick instinct of the hunted thing, he turned and vanished into the dark corridor beyond, just as good Sister Claudia came bustling back into the sacristy.

"I was that onaisy, I came to look afther ye, Sister darlint. And shure it's as could here as the grave! God bless us, it's the porch windy open widout—it must be thrying to reach hivin indade ye are to-night!" And then Claudia stopped short in her loving remonstrance for her "Sister darlint" had reeled over in a dead faint, into her faithful arms.

* * * * * *

Long months of patient suffering followed this Christmas Eve. The June roses found the little Sister Sacristan lying on her couch by the open window, where, weak, and almost speechless she was waiting her Master's call. Many were the loving, grateful tributes sent during these weary months to the dying Sister from those she had served so devotedly in the long ago.

So it was with no surprise that she received a letter bearing the Australian postmark, and directed to the "Sister who had charge of the City Hospital in Chicago in 1885." It was from the parish priest in a little Australian town, and Sister Seraphine's dimming eyes perused the brief lines with joyful amazement, that brought the hectic flush back to her dying cheek.

"DEAR SISTER," ran the letter.

"I trust this will reach you, though I do not even know your name. I write at the request of one of your old patients, Dan Devlin. He wishes me to tell you that he is here under my care, and trying his best to obey your parting words and be a sober, honest, good man. I have found him work with a large farmer, where he is happily removed from all dangerous associates. He has been baptized and made his confession, and is under instruction for confirmation and first communion. I must add in my own name that I have never seen a poor, neglected, un-

taught soul turn more eagerly and earnestly into God's ways. He begs me to thank you for all you have done for him, and to tell 'Lady Sister' her black sheep is safe in the fold.

"Sincerely yours in Christ,

"F. X. Brennan."

Sister Seraphine's eyes filled with happy tears, and that evening with the letter still folded in her wasted hands, she went home to her God.

A MISDIRECTED LETTER.

BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

I.

Frederick Weston sat at his office desk and laughed till a clerk from the outer office thrust in his head by a movement of uncontrollable curiosity, withdrawing it again with a muttered excuse, though not without having seen his employer convulsed, indeed, by laughter. There was no apparent cause for his merriment, unless it might be an open letter which he held in his hand. He read it over and over again, with increasing amusement, until a sudden thought occurred to him. He had been reading what was not meant for his eyes. He referred to a city directory, put the letter into an envelope, sealed and redirected it. When it was stamped, he sent it forth it by the inquisitive clerk, who read upon it the address of a lady:

MISS BLANCHE LEWIS,

— Wabash Avenue.

Having done this, Mr. Weston dismissed the matter from his mind, being presently absorbed in the multifarious affairs which claimed the attention of the head of an immense mercantile concern. But when it was time to leave his desk, he took off his office coat and carefully adjusted an immaculate tweed, replacing his necktie, and, as he did so, surveying his iron-gray hair and a complexion somewhat weatherbeaten by the storms of almost fifty years with a smile of cynical humor.

The following morning's post brought to — Wabash Avenue two letters for Miss Blanche Lewis. The one was an epistle written by herself to an intimate girl friend, now readdressed back to her in a bold, masculine hand. The other was a funny little note from the aforesaid feminine correspondent, declaring that she had received, evidently by mistake, a business note written to Mr. Frederick Weston, applying for a position as stenographer in his vast establishment. She further declared that she had sent on the note to its proper address.

While Blanche Lewis perused first one, then the other of these communications, the hot blood surged into her face; she bit her lip and uttered more than one exclamation of annoyance.

"Oh, what will he think! How can I ever go near him now? And that tiresome Alice must go and send on the note asking for an appointment!"

Her cheeks still burning and her breath coming quickly with vexation and distress, she turned once more to the misdirected epistle which she had written to Alice, and which had so obviously fallen into the wrong hands, and read it over again:

"My Dearest Alice: I am just now trying, it is true, for a position as stenographer, but I am so deadly tired of working and living and dressing upon a pittance and seeing mother and the children want for almost everything, that I am resolved to bend all my energies toward securing an aged millionaire, widower preferred. Just picture me arrayed in purple and fine linen, driving in my own carriage, occupying a mansion and presiding at elaborate dinner tables. Is it very conceited to say that I think I should cut quite as good a figure as half the millionairesses in Chicago? I have good abilities, I am well educated, as girls go, just twenty-four, and of respectable folk.

"As to the obliging widower who will transform me into a queen of society, it matters very little what he is like, so that he be gilded, gilded, gilded! Triple plate! Wasn't there some old king long ago who turned into gold, or could turn things he touched into that metal? Well, he's the very sort I am looking for. Perhaps he may limp, or he may squint, or be blind of one eye, a little deaf, a trifle rheumatic. What does it matter, if his purse and his bankbook be in good condition? You, with your ideas of 'love in a cottage,' will hold up your lily-white hands in

horror at my mercenary self. But the truth remains that I am weary of poverty, and I shall not ill-treat the millionaire, though I know he will be execrable. I detest him already, odious old man, with a limp and a squint, blind, deaf, and rheumatic, and yet holding on to life with a fierce grip. I shall do him credit, though, and ride smiling beside him in our carriage. He won't be able to see how I look, by the way, if he's blind. But that doesn't matter. I shall be a model wife and not mind him at all if he's cantankerous, as, of course, he's sure to be. Good-by, dearest. Wish me success in discovering my millionaire, and, in the mean time, as I must be sordid and try to live upon a salary, pray that I may get the position of stenographer. I have written to Mr. Weston, of the great mercantile house—another tiresome, old frump, I suppose.

"Ever yours lovingly,

"BLANCHE LEWIS."

Blanche Lewis crumpled the letter angrily in her hand and began to pace the room.

"What will that odious Mr. Weston think! If he should chance to be a widower or anything, why, goodness me, he may imagine that it is with a view to that I am trying to get in as stenographer. In any case, it puts me in such an absurd light!"

She sat down and forced herself to think more calmly over the situation. She finally persuaded herself that it was very unlikely that so busy a man as Mr. Weston would take time to read the nonsensical scribbling of one girl to another, and she was confirmed in this view of the affair on receiving by that afternoon's post a very staid and very formal note from Mr. Weston, typewritten and couched in the strictest business terms, asking her to call upon the following day. Also to bring her references, and be prepared to give a practical illustration of her capabilities. She did not know how Mr. Weston had chuckled to himself as he directed this missive, inwardly declaring that he must really see this girl and find out what she was like—that she must be original. He laughed even yet as he recalled certain words and phrases in the misdirected letter.

Quite reassured by the formal tone of the note, Blanche Lewis resolved to call at Mr. Weston's establishment upon the succeeding day. Next morning she made a most careful toilet, in a severely plain fashion, suitable to the occasion, but which chanced to be particularly becoming, and which set off to the best advantage her fine figure, her gift of "style." Her soft, lustrous brown hair appeared in shining waves under her walking hat, her creamy complexion, ordinarily colorless, was suffused with a delicate flush, and her brown eyes sparkled from the exhilaration of the walk.

When Mr. Weston looked up from his desk he saw a young Hebe, who, by her beauty, her freshness, her healthfulness, seemed to diffuse a charm over the prosaic office. This, with the interest already excited by her letter, caused Mr. Weston to regard her visit as a pleasurable incident in the day's happenings. He bade her be seated with a brusk civility which was almost grim, and leaning back in his chair surveyed her an instant with a grave and critical air which gave no clew to his thoughts. It momentarily flashed through his mind that she would, indeed, adorn the head of a dinner table or the principal seat in a landau, but he proceeded to business.

"I understand from your note that you wish an engagement as stenographer? Have you had any experience, Miss Lewis?"

"I have been over a year with Long, Mills, Lawton & Co.," answered Miss Lewis, conscious of an unwonted timidity by reason of that unlucky letter.

"You have a reference from that firm, I presume?" Mr. Weston inquired, and he extended his hand for the letter of recommendation, which Miss Lewis at once produced. Having read it carefully, he remarked:

"That is quite satisfactory. I have besides a few lines from my friend, Mr. Leonard Devlin, who tells me that he is well acquainted with you, and seems most anxious that you should secure this position."

"Oh, yes; Mr. Devlin is an old friend of ours," cried Blanche, brightening up. "It was so good of him to write."

Mr. Weston did not think it necessary to inform her that Mr. Devlin spoke of her as a "glorious little girl," but he said instead:

"I shall now dictate, if you please, a few paragraphs, till I find out your rate of speed before definitely entering into an engagement."

Blanche Lewis felt herself upon her mettle to justify Mr. Devlin's recommendation and her own merits as candidate for a responsible position in an important house, and she acquitted herself wonderfully well. Mr. Weston was, in fact, surprised at her skill and the rapidity with which she took down the notes which he read from a newspaper at his elbow. He had meant to make the test as easy as possible, to oblige Mr. Devlin, whom he held in high estimation, and also because he was as much prepossessed by the girl's appearance and her bright, frank manner as he had been amused and interested by her letter. Therefore, he had done an unusual thing, in the annals of his firm, by personally conducting an examination, which was usually passed over to Mr. Brown, the hard-headed and uncompromising manager. He now found himself, with some surprise, obliged to increase his rate of speed, as he found that Miss Lewis was in advance of him, poising her pencil in her delicate fingers and looking up to catch his next words with quick, bright glances. It was not altogether an unpleasant experience, and Mr. Weston told himself that, did circumstances and expediency permit, he would very much like to employ himself daily in dictating to so charming a stenographer. In point of fact, however, he made use of the services of a spectacled young man, an expert at his trade, but a most uninteresting personality.

At last he laid down the newspaper. Miss Lewis transcribed her notes, and he declared, with a perfectly businesslike and formal gravity, that he found Miss Lewis very well fitted for the post of stenographer, and that he should inquire at once in what department her services could be utilized. He rang the bell and requested the attendance of Mr. Brown. That worthy, a grizzled veteran, who held every employee of the place in awe,

appeared promptly, surveyed Miss Lewis without appearing to do so, and silently awaited his employer's pleasure.

"Mr. Brown," said the head of the firm, "this young lady is desirous of obtaining an engagement as stenographer. A friend, whom I very much wish to oblige, recommends her, and she has a satisfactory reference from Long, Mills, Lawton & Co."

He paused a moment, for some inexplicable reason, scarcely liking to own that he had departed from invariable custom in personally examining a candidate.

"I dictated a few paragraphs myself to Miss Lewis," he said at last, in an offhand tone, "and I find that she is really an excellent stenographer."

Brown's face expressed nothing, though it was quite possible that he saw a reason in the appearance of the young woman herself for his employer's unusual course of action.

"I think there is a vacancy upstairs," Mr. Brown said. "But I shall inquire."

He withdrew, perfectly aware that Mr. Weston had decided for himself to engage the young candidate, and marveling somewhat at this sudden interest on the part of a man who was notoriously indifferent to female charms. When he had gone, Mr. Weston, relaxing ever so slightly from the decorous gravity of his manner, observed, smiling:

"I think, Miss Lewis, you may feel assured that you have been successful in securing the position of—stenographer."

The twinkle in the steel-gray eyes regarding her, and the slight pause before the final word, proved to Blanche Lewis, who was singularly quick of perception, that Mr. Weston had, indeed, read at least a portion of that unlucky letter. To her own vexation she felt the hot blood mounting to her cheeks, while her tongue was powerless to frame a suitable reply. Mr. Weston, without appearing to notice her embarrassment, began to speak of the salary which his house usually paid to stenographers, and to Blanche Lewis the terms seemed surprisingly liberal. She said so frankly, and Mr. Weston declared that it was their custom to pay all employees liberally, expecting the best service in return.

At that moment Mr. Brown reappeared, announcing that he had a vacancy upstairs in the junior partner's office, and the matter was definitely settled. Miss Lewis was to report for duty on Monday following. When she got out in the street she mentally relieved her feelings by indulging in a very tirade against Mr. Weston.

"That odious man!" she said to herself. "He was laughing at me and 'putting me in my place,' I suppose, when he said that I was successful in securing the position of stenographer. Oh, how I hate him already! I wish I could refuse the post. I shall never feel comfortable there—but, then, the salary."

This was an irresistible argument in favor of accepting the situation, and, after all, she hoped that she would not be thrown much in Mr. Weston's way. She trusted that he would not tell the junior partner about the letter, or that that individual would be destitute of all sense of humor. This, indeed, proved to be the case. Mr. Miller was a perfectly harmless, insignificant personage, a married man of twenty years' standing, quite impervious to a jest, and tolerably unlikely to be in Mr. Weston's confidence.

Meanwhile, Mr. Weston, who had really a fine and generous nature, sat at his desk, thinking very kindly of his late visitor.

"Poor, little girl! It's hard luck for her to have to turn out and face the world, and it's lucky she came to us. She might have fallen in with some unscrupulous rascals. I must ask Devlin all about her, and how she comes to be looking for a situation."

His mind reverted again and again during that afternoon to the fascinating subject.

"I couldn't resist that chance shot," he said. "But, by George, if she didn't look frightened! She's the last one to play such a game as she suggested to her friend, and lay herself out to entrap some old hard-pate or other."

When he prepared to leave the office that afternoon, he studied himself somewhat attentively in the office glass. He was not so very old, still on the right side of fifty. True, his hair and beard were gray, but his figure was alert and his eye bright. He could scarcely be called an old man, though, no doubt, to a girl of twenty-four he would seem old enough.

II.

On Monday morning, according to agreement, Miss Lewis arrived and was taken in charge by Mr. Brown, who assigned her to a post of duty in the junior partner's department. She was kept very busy, and had no more than a brief, passing glance occasionally of the head of the firm. But as time went on, Mr. Weston assumed, in her eyes, almost abnormal proportions as to his importance, social and financial, the vast operations of his house, his extreme cleverness and high reputation for integrity in the mercantile world, and his generous, fair, and courteous treatment of those in his employment. It is very little wonder that, to the mind of a young creature shut in by circumstances to the narrowest possible sphere, something like a halo gathered around the head of Mr. Frederick Weston.

The proprietor was, on his part, much more observant of her than it had been possible to suppose. He had inquired concerning her of his friend, Leonard Devlin, and had received a most enthusiastic account. She had been thrown upon the world by the failure and death of her father, once an eminently successful merchant in one of the Eastern cities. She belonged to an unexceptional family, and was the chief support of her widowed mother and several young children.

"She's a magnificent girl," Leonard Devlin had concluded, "and I tell you what, sir, if she ever marries, some man will get a treasure. She's a brick, and no mistake."

"And a very excellent stenographer," Mr. Weston put in, drily. "So, at least, Brown tells me."

"It's a thousand pities to see her shut up in an office," Mr. Devlin cried.

"The fortunes of war," said Mr. Weston, balancing the paper cutter upon his finger. "Up to-day and down to-morrow, and, after all, she might do worse."

"True, true!" agreed Mr. Devlin. "She's very thankful to have the position. It's been a godsend to them,"

After his friend was gone, Frederick Weston sat drumming thoughtfully with his fingers upon the desk. Brown, the hardheaded, the unimpressionable, had been almost as enthusiastic about the girl, describing her as sensible, discreet, business-like, and a capital stenographer. And above and beyond all this praise of Blanche Lewis was Mr. Weston's own shrewd estimate of her character, the glimpse he had had of her humor and spright-liness in the letter, her unusual beauty and fine appearance, and a certain piqued curiosity to find out whether she still pursued her search after a millionaire or had settled down to stenography and independence.

By a curious coincidence he met Blanche Lewis that very afternoon, giving her his usual distant bow, considerably more formal and constrained than he would have bestowed on any of his masculine employees, or on those elderly damsels whom Mr. Brown kept employed in one department or another. He did not know that these occasional meetings had grown to be the chief interest in Blanche Lewis' dull, prosaic life. So things wagged on for some time longer, though a certain, intangible progress was being made in the understanding of each other by the millionaire proprietor and the penniless stenographer, chiefly through the influence of outside people.

One day there was a press of important work. Mr. Weston's spectacled young man was detained at home by illness, and Mr. Brown at once suggested that Miss Lewis should take his place. Mr. Weston assented with outward carelessness, but with an inward tremor, and a disturbance in the cardiac region, to which Mr. Weston had been long a stranger. Miss Lewis answered the summons to the office with a nervous trepidation, which she successfully controlled, and worked away for an hour or two under Mr. Weston's rapid dictation. She was not, however, at her best. She seemed far less quick than usual, and made a number of mistakes, which would have been quite unaccountable to Mr. Brown.

When she had finished and was taking up her book preparatory to departure, Mr. Weston leaned back in his chair and surveyed her in his usual deliberate manner.

"Miss Lewis," he said, "I am afraid Brown has been overrating you. You are not nearly so good a stenographer as I thought."

The blood rushed impulsively to the girl's face, and then left it pale, as a vision of losing her situation flashed into her mind.

"I am very sorry," she said. "I don't feel quite myself to-

day. I fancy it is the heat."

"No," said Mr. Weston, gravely. "It is, I think, that the position of stenographer does not suit you at all. I have, however, something else in view, and, with your permission, I shall call upon you this evening and talk the matter over. Will you be at home?"

"Yes," said Miss Lewis, faintly, "and I shall be glad, of course, of your advice, if you find that I do not suit my present position."

"What is your address?" Mr. Weston inquired, carefully noting it down in his memorandum book, and dismissing the stenographer with his customary gravity.

He presented himself at the Lewis' dwelling shortly after eight, announcing that he had a business appointment at the Palmer House with a man from New York precisely at nine. After the interchange of a few commonplaces, the visitor said:

"I have been hearing a great deal about you from my friend, Devlin, and my manager, Mr. Brown, is most eulogistic as to the character of your work, but I am not at all satisfied that you are suited to the position of stenographer."

Blanche Lewis did not very well know what to answer to this, and merely said:

"I am very sorry."

"Well, to be perfectly frank with you, Miss Lewis, I once read a certain letter which you addressed to a confidential friend. I began to read it inadvertently and continued to the end. In it you expressed your views with regard to life, jestingly, of course. But I think your views were correct."

He paused, as if waiting for some word, and there was once more the twinkle in the gray eyes, but Blanche Lewis, fairly overcome with confusion, made no attempt at a reply. "Yes; you were quite right," Mr. Weston went on. "Marriage, generally speaking, is the safest career for a woman, and in this country a wealthy marriage is always within the possibilities to one who has, you must pardon the personality, so many attractions as yourself. One thing I wanted to ask you this evening—are you still desirous of being the wife of a millionaire?"

"Sir," cried Blanche Lewis, this jesting is very much misplaced in our relative positions, and I beg of you to understand

that I will submit to no impertinence."

Mr. Weston nodded his head approvingly. Of course, she was quite right, and how extremely becoming to her was the momentary flash of anger.

"You are mistaken," he said, gravely. "I mean no impertinence whatever. I am simply putting matters on a business footing. I have, as I said, an appointment, and can spare just twenty minutes more."

He glanced at his watch as he spoke, replacing it in his pocket.

"Now, to put the matter in a nutshell, if you are still disposed to marry a millionaire, I am at your service. I am old compared to you. Millionaires usually are, especially if they have made the money themselves. It is a fatal defect in their composition. But as you explained to your friend, you are about tired of poverty and of a struggle which is, in fact, a poor business for any woman. I am a bit tired of mere money-getting, which has occupied me for so long, and I fancied we might hit it off together. What do you think?"

He laughed in an embarrassed fashion, looking at her steadily through those steel-gray eyes which he could make as expressionless as he chose, and went on hurriedly, as if to cover the ob-

stinate silence in which Blanche Lewis persisted.

"I quite agree with you that you would cut a better figure than the wife of any millionaire I know, and, as you observed, what the millionaire is like matters little. Only let me add if he be a decent sort of fellow, who will treat you well, and, as additional security, a fairly good Catholic, with a certain amount of conscience." Blanche Lewis still sat bewildered. She could not believe her ears that this great, good fortune had really come to pass, and that this commercial magnate, whom she had learned so to admire, was actually offering her his hand. The whimsical affectation of drollery and the continued allusions to her letter did not entirely conceal his real earnestness. Seeing, however, that the girl did not respond, Mr. Weston rose.

"Time's up!" he said, "but I beg that you will think over what I have said, and make up your mind if I would fill the bill as a millionaire bridegroom. By the way, I am only a bachelor—and I think you put it that a widower was preferred. But, perhaps, you will not allow that trifling disadvantage to tell against me."

He extended his hand in farewell. Blanche gave him hers. He held it an instant, saying somewhat wistfully:

"Ah, Blanche, Blanche, time was when, with all your beauty and all your charms, I would only have taken you on condition of love for love, but now I confess that I will be thankful to have you on any terms. May I come to-morrow for my answer?"

Blanche Lewis answered, as it were, mechanically: "Yes; that will be better. I want a little time to think. It is so sudden!"

He went away and Blanche Lewis did her thinking with a vengeance. Next morning a note was received by Mr. Brown at the establishment announcing Miss Lewis' resignation from the post of stenographer. That afternoon she took a walk with Mr. Weston in the direction of the lake, from which the millionaire went home happier than he had ever expected to be. Miss Lewis' friend Alice received a second letter, which read as follows:

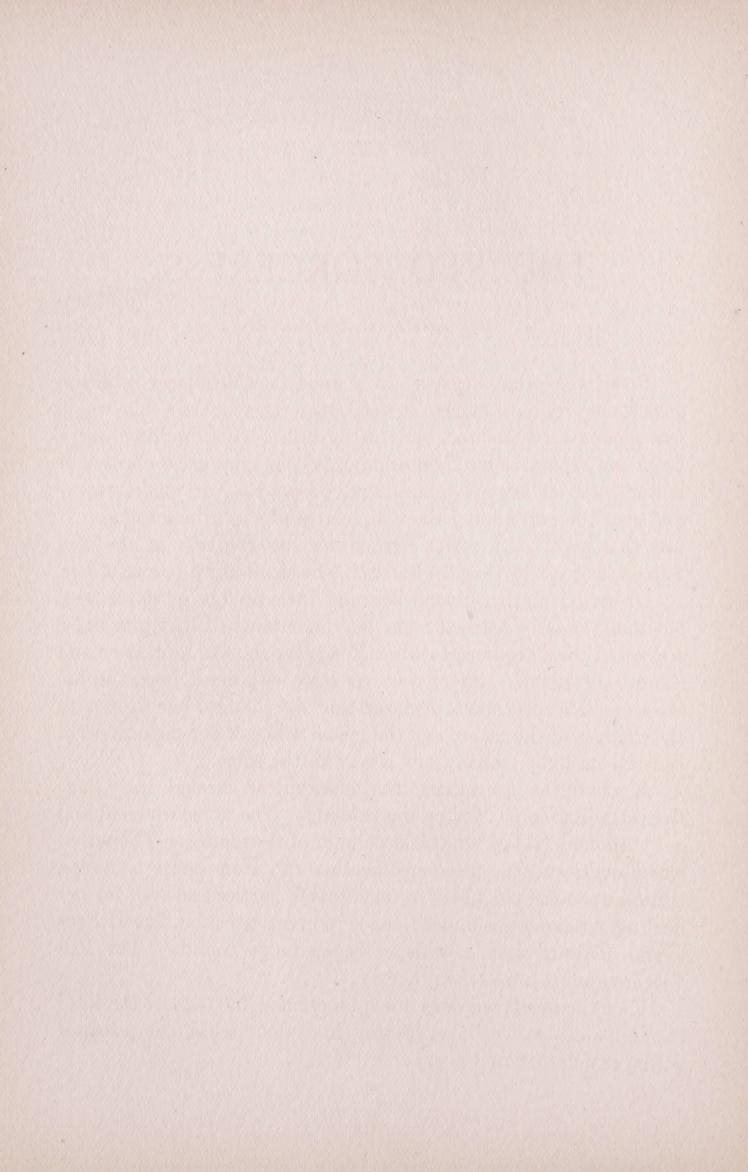
"My Dearest Alice: I am the luckiest of sinners. You are getting love in a cottage, I am going to have it in a palace. I dreamed of a millionaire and thought that, even if he were ugly, old, and crabbed, I would have married him to escape poverty. I know now that I could never have done such a thing. But I have done better. I have fallen in love with a millionaire whom I prefer to any other person in the world. He is simply an ideal man—honorable, high-minded, generous, a good Catholic, and so

wonderfully clever, a merchant prince and a prince among merchants. Best of all, he is very much in love with me. At first he put romance and all that sort of thing out of the question, but when he found that I really cared for him, during our walk by the lake, he confessed that he had fallen in love with me on first reading that misdirected letter. We are to be married in a month. Mother is delighted. It is such a good thing for her, poor soul, and for us all."

Alice laughed and cried a little over her friend's good luck and at the fact of mercenary Blanche suddenly turning sentimental. Leonard Devlin, too, on hearing the news, rushed in to his wife, waving Mr. Weston's letter in the air.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "Weston's going to marry Blanche Lewis. He knows a thing or two. He's a shrewd fellow, but, by George, my dear, this is the best deal he ever made."

"And to think," as Blanche Lewis put it, "that it all came about through a misdirected letter."



THE RED SORCERESS.

BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

SHE lived—that negress—in a wood to which local tradition gave some very hard names. It stood upon the shore of a lake which was gloomy and isolated, shut in by hills. Her dwelling was a large and capacious hut, and around its door grew great clusters of flowers, scarlet always—geraniums, or poppies, or gladioluses and over the porch hung the red clusters of the trumpet-vine. was this peculiarity which earned for her the title of the Red Sorceress, given by the people about, who stood much in awe of her.

Of her life in that gloomy solitude little need be set down here, but much may be learned from the inhabitants of that particular section of the Carolinas, to whom for years she was a mystery and a source of dread. Rumor was ever busy with her doings, and the most credible informants declared that she changed her form with the changes of the moon, and that those who saw her picking herbs beneath its light scarcely saw her twice the same.

It was in the late autumn that news spread through the village that little Randolph Morton was missing. The nurse who had him out with her could give no clear account of the matter. was absent, and the distracted mother ran from house to house, calling upon the neighbors to form search parties and seek for her darling. Search was, indeed, made in every direction, but without Toward dusk a whisper began to go round: "The Red Sorceress must have taken the boy!"

Then the nurse, who was much frightened, having lost the child through pure carelessness, leaving him alone while she gossiped

with a crony, took up the cry:

"The negress must have bewitched little Randolph, and carried him off by magic. I could not have lost him in any other way."

That was enough. The bravest men of the village organized themselves into a band. They would seek out that accursed sorceress and if any proof could be found that she had meddled with the child her cabin would be burned over her head and she driven from the country. It was a chill evening, with red gleams in the sky, angrily streaking the gray. The wind moaned in the forest and rattled the dry leaves. Some of the strongest men felt their nerves shaken, so uncanny and witch-like was the sound.

The party advanced till they were within sight of the cottage. Only the skeleton of the trumpet-vine waved drearily in the blast. The cabin was in darkness, save for one tiny light, which glowed out through the narrow window, while pine-trees, as grim sentinels, stood before the door. The woman's voice was heard crooning a low and monotonous song, which chilled the hearts of those who came and caused them to stop abruptly. It was some moments before the stoutest-hearted advanced and peered in at the window. He gave a startled cry, and the others pressed around. Till that moment few among them had really believed that the woman had stolen the child, or, at least, that she would keep it in the cabin. The whisper went about: "The child is inside!"

There was a pause, during which fierce indignation swelled up in every breast, for the men were mostly fathers of families and had children of their own. They rushed at the cabin door, beating fiercely upon it with their fists. At first there was dead silence within; then, at last, a slow step was heard advancing to the door, and a head crowned by a flaming red turban appeared. The face that head-dress surmounted was ebony black, and of hideous ugliness, causing all who beheld it to shrink back an instant. This was momentary, however, and the forward rush was accompanied by cries of:

[&]quot;Give up the child, you black devil!"

[&]quot;Dip her in the stream!"

"Burn her at the stake!"

The door was pushed wide open, and the woman stood and trembled like the aspen that just without her threshold quivered at the breath of coming storms. It was immediately noted that there was blood upon the negress' arm and clothing. The blood of the child! It was, then, true—that horrifying tale of the children she killed for magic rites. The commotion grew wilder and wilder, the strong and terrible race prejudice was mingled with natural and honest indignation. The woman was black; therefore she was capable of any crime. It was some time before her voice could make itself heard.

"Gentlemen, pity!" she cried. "The child am here alive, and the little honey, he ain't much hurt."

Cries of rage drowned her words.

"She confesses! She has him here and she dares to tell us he is but little hurt!" cried several voices. Two or three men burst across the threshold and to the rude bed upon which the child lay, asleep or unconscious. Upon him, too, was blood, and at that sight the woman was seized, bound with thongs, and dragged rudely forth. Her piteous cries were re-echoed in the lonely depths of the wood where so long she had made her home, and it scared the owl from its cover, so that he went hooting forth. The little figure of the child was tenderly lifted and borne out into the night.

The hut was left cold and deserted, a stream of moonlight falling over the floor and displaying the bunches of herbs, symbol of that fatal trade in which the inmate of the hut had passed so many years. While two stern-faced men held the hapless woman, whom they were hurrying relentlessly toward the jail, the others piled dry logs about the cabin and set them ablaze. The negress, seeing this, uttered a piercing shriek, and struggled with her captors, while the flames leaped up eerily, crackling and blazing in the green shadow of the pines.

The sorceress could, therefore, scarce believe her senses when she awoke from what seemed to her a long and dreamless sleep, in a comfortable bed in a pleasant room, to find a sweet-faced woman bending over her. She thought she must be dreaming still, and feared to touch the cooling draught which was at once held to her lips, while a kindly arm supported her. She tried to speak, but her tongue seemed parched and swollen. At last she got out the words:

"Good lady, is Hannah dreamin'?"

There was a tremor in her voice, and she trembled as she spoke.

"No, you are not dreaming," said the lady; "you are with friends."

Suddenly, with a wild, frightened cry, the old woman covered her face with her hands. She had just remembered the angry crowd surrounding her, the moonlight scattering the darkness with its silvery arrows, and the crackling flames leaping up to burn her home. This was the cruelest thought, and the tears forced themselves from her eyes and down her cheeks.

"I ain't got no friends among the white folks," she said, in a scared tone, adding, in a broken voice, "I don't know where I be, Missa; I don't live nowhere now. Hannah's cabin, they done burned it."

The infinite sadness of her tone touched the listener deeply.

"You shall have a home here," she said.

"Here?" repeated the other, dazed. Then she shook her head.

"They done burned it," she repeated, mournfully.

"Oh, they treated you shamefully," cried the lady, angrily, "without waiting, without knowing."

The eyes of the negress were turned upon the white woman in surprise. She had been accustomed to ill-treatment, and the events of that memorable evening had been but the crowning of her miserable life.

"You saved my child!" cried the lady, in a sudden burst of gratitude, seizing the black, shriveled hand in both her own. "He told me in his baby way that the good, black woman saved him from an awful thing which jumped upon him from a tree."

"The wildcat done jumped on him," assented the negress.

"It tore him and it tore me. It had powerful sharp claws, but I got the boy inside the cabin afore he was hurt much."

Then she covered her face at the thought of the hut which existed no longer, and the tears fell fast again upon the coverlet.

"They done burned it," she wailed, in an agony of sorrow.

The mother was weeping, too. The old woman seemed to feel no other wound, though she had several scratches from the wildcat, carefully dressed by the surgeon, and many bruises and cuts, where she had been bound and dragged along.

"I lived there 'most always," she said, turning to the lady, as if in explanation, when her grief had exhausted itself. "It was in the slave time. I got away, and the dogs they didn't find me. I was young, and I jest stayed there. But now they done burned it, an' I don't know where to go."

Her voice was very weak, and there was a trembling in her frame, and her face had a strange, ashen color.

"I couldn't grapple much with the wildcat," she said, smiling faintly; "it had powerful claws, an' I ain't overstrong, Missa, an' I'm ole, too, 'most as ole as the oak near my door."

Her face worked again.

"I ain't got no door now," she said, plaintively.

"They shall build you another cabin, if you don't want to stay here," the lady promised.

The woman brightened a little, but the gleam did not hide the ashen pallor. It was growing and spreading, and suddenly the white woman beside her knew there would be no need for building that cabin. Her heart was full of sorrow and indignation for the poor creature. She knew that it was part of that race hatred which condemns unheard one whose face is black.

"The boy, he done come to me," said the negress, with a smile. "He warn't afraid of me, nohow."

The change was becoming more marked, the eyes wandered, the speech grew indistinct, and the murmurs that came of the forest and the cabin were incoherent. In alarm, the mother of the rescued child sent off for priest and doctor, sitting down to wait their coming beside that death-bed. From the parched and shrunken lips, of an awful pallor now, came clear and distinct the words:

"The good Lord, He knows I did no evil, and they done burned my house. I ain't got none now. I don't live nowheres."

The breathing was becoming very faint. The white woman bent over her, murmuring prayers which the lips seemed striving to repeat. Then she whispered softly to her:

"Hannah's going home now."

The dark face broke into a smile which restored it almost to youth, and the failing voice added:

"Yes, honey, I'se goin' home."

The priest, who had given her communion that morning, arrived barely in time to give the final absolution, and the doctor to pronounce her dead. She was buried with a monument of gratitude from the mother of the child, and of remorse from the people of the village. It bore an inscription relating the incident and her sad fate. But ever after that pile of ashes in the forest near the great oak and the aspen tree was pointed at with a superstitious dread that was half reverence, and clusters of red flowers, running wild, still marked the spot where had lived the Red Sorceress.

THE STRANGE STORY OF WALTER PEARTREE.

BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

Fragments of the tale I have many times heard from those who remember when Manhattan was under the rule of the Dutch, and did not owe allegiance to the King's majesty. But in searching among some old documents relating to the Schuyler family, I found the detailed narrative of the events of that memorable Christmas eve, set down in the delicate calligraphy of Mistress Catalyna Schuyler herself. The manuscript is somewhat worn and faded, so that divers words and phrases can be but conjectured. The incidents border on the marvelous, and were plainly so regarded by our ancestors, until fuller light was thrown upon them in the sequel. Perchance, our forefathers were more credulous than we, though, in truth, I do not incline to overskepticism. I will endeavor to transcribe, as faithfully as possible, that quaint document, recording those happenings which might have wrecked the happiness of a maid, had not the providence of God thrown light upon a mystery.

The events here set down took place in the year of Our Lord, 1676, just when the town of New Amsterdam, even to its most sober citizens, after the manner of the Dutch, was agog over the celebration of Christmas, and all the little maids and urchins went about the streets, keeping watch with wide-open eyes for the coming of St. Nicholas. Christmas, that year, set in very cold and stormy, with frosts so severe and roads so encumbered with snow, as almost to hinder traffic. The posts, in truth, have been conveyed from Albany on snow-shoes, and a hundred sleighs have crossed the ice from Staten Island with provisions,

One Walter Peartree, concerning whom this weird tale is told, abode in a quaint stone house which has stood on Piewoman Street,* below the Great Highway,† since the beginning of these colonies. He lived quite alone, and though, in the ordinary, he was esteemed a harmless man, there were not wanting malicious tongues to ascribe to him the possession of magical powers, and to hint, moreover, that he received mysterious visitors, booted and spurred, as for hard-riding, after honest folk were asleep.

Be this as it may, the master of the stone dwelling was a silent and unsocial man, keeping his face so that few had ever seen it, muffled in the huge cloak which covered his spare frame, whenever he walked abroad. I will confess that he has ever had a wondrous fascination for my mind. Often have I passed and repassed his abode, hoping for some marvel to display itself, or striving to catch a glimpse of this mysterious personage, who had about him so shrewd a touch of romance. In this last attempt have I been many times successful, perceiving him many times at the window. Each time the foolish fancy seized me, setting my heart beating high with excitement, that he watched me with intentness.

Again, I have passed him by in the street and have fancied that his eyes gleamed at me, oddly, from the fold of his cloak. Never have I been able to determine with exactness the real aspect of his face, though frequently I have heard men, in my father's house, describe his countenance as of ashen white, framed with sparse, silver locks.

And now to my story:

It was Christmas eve, and the bell from the old Dutch church tolled to herald the coming of the midnight and remind the devoutly-minded of the sacred birth of Christ the Redeemer. Horns likewise sounded, sleigh-bells tinkled merrily, for the snow lay on the ground, and greetings were exchanged among the passers-by upon the streets. I, Catalyna Schuyler, was on my

^{*} This street changed its appellation to Nassau, after the accession of William of Orange.—ED. MS.

[†] Broadway.

homeward way, with a company of damsels and gallants, from a dancing party, given at the Tea Rooms, near Cuyler's Sugar House, by Mistress Van Dam. We were all in merry mood, jesting and pelting each other with the snow and crying out "Merry Christmas." My eyes fairly danced with mirthfulness, my laugh rang the most gleefully, and my cheeks glowed with the nip of the frost.

Of a sudden, we found ourselves before the dwelling of Master Peartree. A silence fell upon the group, for the place was of uncanny repute after nightfall. Now, as every one knows, in the dark months of the year, each seventh householder is compelled by law, to put forth a lanthorn on a pole over his door. This was an ordinance which Walter Peartree had ever evaded, suffering fines and being threatened by the Schout* with imprisonment. I remembered stealing to my room and crying bitter tears, because I overheard my father say that Master Peartree was to be put in jail for refusing to light his premises, and stood in danger of banishment from the Colonies.

Most prodigious, then, was our amazement to note that the dwelling was alight from top to bottom. I was seized with a very ague of fear, and my companions of the female sex were grievously perturbed. The gentlemen made show of great bravery, handling their swords and cocking their hats, but I make no doubt, they were inwardly quaking with fear. We stood still and looked up the street and down the street again to where the East River lay black between us and the Breuklyn shore. We gazed upward at the dark-blue heavens, sprinkled with the stars of the Christmas tide, and into one another's faces, but all was of no avail to explain the phenomenon.

At last, Abel Bloodgood, who chanced to be at my side, spoke out his mind:

"Master Peartree has been forcibly ejected from his dwelling or there has been murder done."

At this I grew pale and a more grievous alarm filled my heart,

^{*} Magistrate.

for in some strange fashion the uncanny owner of that edifice had grown dear to me!

"Lads!" cried Will Bogardus, a lusty and stalwart youth, "let us bestow the ladies in safety and return to discover what this marvel may signify."

"Nay," objected I, moved strongly by this new terror; "shut us not out, I pray you, from this adventure. 'Tis but a Christmas mummery whereby a dwelling of sober aspect doth masquerade as a house of revelry. Suffer us to proceed with you in your quest."

This suggestion was well received, even by the most timorous of my companions, and together we all drew nigh to the foot of the stoop. My heart beat high, my cheek flushed; I was thrilling with the sense of mystery and adventure, and with the thought that I should now behold Master Peartree, face to face, in his weird domicile. If, indeed, he were alive and unhurt as I prayed God. Will Bogardus led the way to the door, followed closely by the other gallants, and began a furious knocking with the silver-plated knocker. We had scant hope of gaining admittance, yet, at the summons the door flew open and within stood revealed, not the shabby and aged figure we had expected, but a personage richly clad and of much distinction in his bearing. The gentlemen of our company bowed low, and each lady entering swept a formal courtesy, to which this mysterious apparition responded by a deep obeisance. I came last, lingering strangely and with downcast eyes. To my surprise, the stranger whispered, as I passed him by:

"Welcome, fair mistress, to this poor abode!"

Then he spoke aloud to all the company.

"I give you the season's joy, beauteous ladies and brave gentlemen of New Amsterdam. I pray you enter yon wainscoted apartment, where the musicians await the dancers."

There was a visible hesitation on the part of every one. But the blood of youth is warm, and even the frosts of that Christmas night had no power to chill its glow. A dance is ever a magic word in the ears of youth, and so we were fain to enter. Lights abounded. One end of the room was fairly aglow with sconces upon the walls or tapers in curiously wrought candlesticks upon a chimneypiece. The walls were wainscoted, with tapestries reaching upward thence to the frieze. Musicians were in waiting; not those of the town, but men in strange garb, playing upon foreign instruments and speaking, betimes, in uncouth jargon.

Observing our entertainer in the glow of the lights, I did perceive him to be of comely countenance, with eyes that were piercing dark and full of merriment; a brown, curling wig, with a figure straight and tall. His costume was rich, betokening wealth and modishness in its wearer, but suggesting something of another century, or of having come, peradventure, beyond seas. So that as I looked I grew grievously confused, as one walking in a dream. There were no silvery locks, nor ashen cheeks, nor sour looks. Walter Peartree, as he might have been in lusty youth. Or was it, in truth, he?

I watched him moving courteously among his guests, neglecting none, lingering now here, now there among my fair companions, which did curiously disquiet me. But his eyes were often upon me, tender and deep, with such expression in them, which I could not read. At length he made inquiry as to what dance might be favored by the assembly, and spoke to the musicians, who therewith began a tune which accorded well with the "Opera Reel," then much affected by the modish of our town. While the other couples took their places, our host advanced toward me with a low obeisance, begging my hand for the dance. His look, half pleading, half mirthful, strangely thrilled me, and taking my hand he led me to join the dancers. The first couple led off down the room; my partner seized my hands and our feet flew over the polished floor, so that I presently forgot everything, save that I was dancing with the handsomest gentleman it had ever been my fortune to see. And it appeared to me that he was in some curious way well known and beloved.

When the dance was over, Walter Peartree led me to a retired corner of the room, offering me a seat, with the low bow affected by people of the highest fashion. Then he stood, intently regarding me.

"And so, sweet mistress," he began, "you have come at length to this dwelling which hath long waited for the light of those lovely eyes to illumine it."

I was mightily amazed by this speech, and could but look downward, while this strange personage continued:

"That cheek, where the lily and carnation blend, that brow of ivory, that hair, Cupid's veritable bow-strings, have set my heart on fire, Catalyna, cruel Catalyna."

There was mingled mirth and daring in this employment of my name, and the language of flattery was but little used by the gentlemen of New Amsterdam, who had not learned to win a woman's ear by courtly phrases. Yet could I not rebuke him as was fitting, for the beating of my heart. When I strove, indeed, to chide, he stopped me forthwith, crying:

"Nay, you are too rose-beautiful to be so barbarously cruel, and on this night of all the nights. The time is short and I prithee hear my love tale, for I do confess that it is to that end alone I have brought you hither."

"Brought me hither," I cried in amaze, "and in what manner?"

"By that trait of your sweet sex which seeks ever to penetrate the unknown. Some uncurtained windows, a handful of tapers, and the deed is done!"

He laughed in a careless fashion, which caused me to laugh likewise, though I was fain, indeed, to be wroth and to frown upon this daring gallant.

"Nay, frown not, lovely Catalyna," cried he, "forgive my discourtesy, but ceremony is but frost upon the pane when breathed upon by the flame of true love."

"But, sir," I cried, "I pray you to inform me by what name you are called?"

"Men call me Walter Peartree," he made answer, lightly, "but what have names to do with love? Call me what you will, only be assured that my heart is yours, that I do most truly love you, and do hope one day to wed you."

"Wed me!" I cried, "why, sir, you do but jest!" For to my

austere upbringing this bold declaration of love from one but newly met appeared most startling.

"Nay, 'twould be but a sorry jest, sweet lady," this singular personage answered, with earnestness, "and still sorer to me should you deny my suit."

Surely there was magic in it, but as I raised my eyes to his face, I felt assured of this, that I could love none other and must of necessity marry this bold wooer, or die unwed. He laughed as he met my eyes, for his own were full, shrewd, and searching.

"It needs not words," he cried, "when eyes are eloquent, and the blush on a fair maiden's cheek is more convincing than argument. But it is of moment that you learn how truly I have loved you, and how your glances, few and stolen, have haunted my solitude, till, at last, I have devised this merry-making to bring you to my dwelling, that you might know the very truth."

I listened in silence, scarce knowing how I should make answer to this whimsical lover.

"Confess, fairest maiden," he went on, gaily, "that your feet have often strayed to this quarter of the town. Was it, I wonder, the magnet of my love which drew you, or was it but the curiosity of your sex which set your woman's wits to work?"

"I know not!" answered I, blushing that he had discovered my foolish infatuation for his house. "But you were not here, since I have never seen aught save an aged man muffled in a cloak."

"Were you so very certain he was aged?" laughed he, merrily.

"Was it, in truth, you?" I cried out, forgetting my discretion.

"Tush, sweetheart, let me play out my game!" he answered; "what haste to know! Suffice it that I love you, that I am your lover sent you by St. Nicholas, and that I do but crave a hearing."

Needs not to set down here those arguments by which he overcame all my resolve. I was but a simple maiden and he a courtly gallant, and I have ever held that there was in it all some of those enchantments which the vulgar hold to have power on festal nights. Howsoever it might be, I had presently given my promise that no living man should put a ring upon my finger, nor call me wife or sweetheart until he should claim me. And when I had thus pledged my faith, Master Peartree drew forth from his satin doublet a tiny casket, whence he produced a ring, so set with gems of price that it fairly dazzled my sight. Having placed this upon my finger, he moved with me into the center of the room, raising his voice and courteously bidding his guests to the supper, which lay spread in the blue-room on the other side of the hallway. He offered me his hand, and led the way to a sumptuous banquet, which lay spread upon the board, abounding in all manner of Christmas cheer, with scarlet-berried holly, and the white berries and dull green of the mistletoe. Viands, with outlandish names, but withal savory to the taste, were there in profusion; sweetmeats, rich and cloying to our simple palates; Christmas geese and turkeys, spiced hams and capons, and in their midst a peacock, bearing in its beak a scroll of merry Christmas. A boar's head, gaily bedecked with greenery, crowned the top of the board.

Rare and costly wines were served, and a steaming bowl of mead stood before our host. This bowl was in form like a dragon's head, and bore upon it strange characters, the meaning of which Master Peartree thus interpreted:

"Drink from me to beauty, joy, and pleasantness!" Our host conversed with all about him, bandying gay jests, but keeping ever a smile for me, the most silent of the company. When the repast was near its ending, he arose, crying:

"Gentlemen, I give you a toast, which all must drink!"

Those addressed were upon their feet in an instant, the light catching the bright-hued canary wine in their glasses and changing it to molten gold. None, methought, among all these gallants was so graceful of motion, so courtly of demeanor, as Walter Peartree.

"To my betrothed!" he exclaimed, "who, amid many fair ladies, is, in my mind, the fairest in all these Colonies of New Netherlands!"

He raised his glance, and after a moment of suspense added, "To Mistress Catalyna Schuyler."

He drained the glass, and the other gentlemen did likewise, though with ominous gravity, and there was a frown upon the

countenance of honest Will Bogardus, who had long sought my favor, but could in no wise compare with this other. Many and curious glances, some of them, I opine, half envious, were cast upon me by the damsels present. But I cared not, so fully had the spell of that courtly personage wrought upon me, and so proud was I of this handsome and gallant lover. Scarce did I pause to ask myself whether, indeed, he were spirit or mortal.

When we returned to the wainscoted chamber I had no doubt been assailed by a hundred curious questions, had not our singular host claimed me for every dance. They followed each other in quick succession: "The Favorite of Fancy," "The Battle of Culloden," "La Belle Katherine," "Apollo turned Shepherd." I followed their intricate mazes joyously with my mysterious lover.

At last some one cried out that there was a hint of dawn in the sky and that we must even return home. Master Peartree's eyes were fixed upon my countenance in one long look. He held my hand, bowing low, and, in the twinkling of an eye, there was darkness. The lights had vanished, and with them the musicians, and even our host himself. Only there came to me a voice, as it were from afar:

"Remember, Catalyna, none may woo or wed the betrothed of Walter Peartree!"

Will Bogardus rushed to the front entrance, seized a lanthorn from the hand of a sleepy watchman, and returned to discover what it all might mean. Tapers and chimney piece, musicians and all were gone. The room, a plain and meager one, square and of small proportions, contained but ourselves.

"'Tis a device of the evil one!" cried many. "We have sinned in forgetting the sacred eve." The company, with one accord, looked askance at me, and though I felt a chilliness of doubt creep over me, I bent my head and pledged my faith anew to Walter Peartree.

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The manuscript there ended abruptly, with a trace as of tears upon the page. The beauteous Catalyna, as I apprehend from family chronicles, entered upon a season of much gloom, shunned

by the gallants, to whom, in truth, she gave the cold shoulder, and avoided by the maids, as having incurred a malison by betrothal with a phantom. Her heart, too, was sore with longing for that lover who, in spirit or in the flesh, had won her troth.

Most curious of all, Walter Peartree was seen, as of old, in the streets of the city, sour and crabbed, with white locks and ashen face, and once, when Catalyna, who hung upon his footsteps, would have addressed him, he turned upon her a look of menace and fled. This circumstance was fully vouched for by divers observers. I would have had to end my tale here, holding the occurrence to be one of those manifestations of the marvelous, which even in this enlightened year, 1720, occasionally confound the overskeptical.

But the sequel to the tale was likewise found among the Schuyler chronicles, together with a time-worn extract from the Weekly News Letter, wherein was set forth among the Christmas festivities of a certain year of grace, the wedding of Mistress Catalyna Schuyler to a gentleman of rank and fortune from over seas, who had sometime made his abode in New Amsterdam, under the familiar style and title of Master Peartree. Details were not wanting of the exceeding great splendor which marked the nuptial ceremonies, and of the part which good St. Nicholas took therein. For, in truth, it was a fanciful device of the bridegroom that the lovely lady was a gift to him from the patron of Christmastide.

Hints were not wanting as to the highly romantic circumstances under which the youthful pair had plighted their troth, and an explanation was attempted of the mysteries which had rendered memorable a previous Christmas eve. The jugglery of the wainscoted room was plainly disclosed, and now that concealment was at an end, it was shown forth that these devices, together with the ungainly disguise under which a handsome and courtly gentleman had dwelt, were connected with a certain species of trading affected by many men of good repute in the Colonies, and were, moreover, closely allied with political convictions. So was it made manifest that the strange story of Walter Peartree was not, in truth, so very strange after all.

THE SILVER AX.

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BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

Mary took the letter, and looked at it with close and critical attention. It was now nearly three months since she had begun to receive these curious missives. At first there had been an interval of a week or ten days between the receipt of each, now they came daily. Their tone, at first denoting the passing interest of a stranger, had warmed into lover-like devotion. There was no signature, no visible sign or token which might betray whence they came, save a silver ax on an azure ground. It was perplexing; it was more, it was vexatious—and in the beginning Mary Martin was disposed to be angry at what she deemed the impertinent obtrusiveness of the unknown. Gradually, with a girl's natural love of mystery, she grew interested. The letters were so respectful, so full of gentle deference, that she could not be wroth with the writer, though he called her Mary, and made love to her on paper, without revealing his identity. Indeed, her interest gave place, after a time, to a somewhat warmer feeling, as she made her way to the summer house to find out what "that foolish fellow" had written now.

They never arrived by the post, and, indeed, a daily correspondence would in that initial year of the nineteenth century have been impossible, as well as a considerable expense. Moreover, the writer would have run an almost certain chance of detection. As it was, Mary kept the letters to herself, and no eyes but her own ever read a line of them. She was an only child. While she was still an infant her mother died, and her father was very much engrossed with his own affairs. It would be impossible, of course, to give the entire correspondence in the short

space of a story, though it would be interesting as illustrating the gradual growth of the tender passion in a man of poetic feeling and thoughtful mind. A few extracts chosen at random may be of interest before hastening on to the sequel of this curious narrative:

Letter dated June 15, and signed with the Silver Ax.

"Did you ever, on a bright October day, when autumn had superseded summer, feel it a delight to be alive, to look on the beautiful things of nature, and to say that the Creator is good? So have I felt in beholding you pass, your face so fair, your eyes blue as the corn-flower, sweet and serious, your firm and upright gait.

"Did you ever, on a spring day, catch its full beauty, so rare, so fleeting, a breath of joy and of new life in every breeze, or the green hue, unequaled for purity and delicacy, and have felt as might have felt those who walked by the river of life, in the terrestrial paradise? With such keen delight, Mary, do I behold your sweet youth, the charm of a day, rare, evanescent, informed by the lovely soul behind the material charms.

"Did you ever feel the full repose and majesty of summer, Nature in its prime bestowing abundantly all goodly things upon mankind? So do I look forward toward the summer into which the spring of your youth will merge, bestowing sweetness on all around. I ask myself who will be so blessed as to enjoy that summer, gathering up its treasures into careful hoards for the winter of life. Mary, I envy him who will pass that winter with you, the sunshine of your presence dispelling its dreariness, your smile thawing the very icicles, and your beauty enhanced by the hoarfrost of time.

"All seasons speak of you, Mary. You are my calendar. All beauteous things recall your image. The flowers at my feet, here-tofore unnoted, gain a significance, a poetry, for I seek there a resemblance, I discern a symbol of you. The blue of your eyes, the lily of your cheek, suffused at times by a wild-rose blush, most exquisite, the yellow of your hair. I should never have courage to say these things, but I write them, and I remain unknown, lest

knowing me, you should esteem me unworthy and reject my love before weighing its value. One cold glance from you, Mary, would be more chilling than a frost. Therefore, if you frown at my words, this cold, inanimate paper can not feel the cruel thrust.

"You have, I know, a feeling heart. Indeed, I have already endowed you with all those qualities which, alas! too rare, men so highly value. I know you generous, high-minded, loyal, as you are sweet and pure and fair. Popular report has, for once, set its sanction on a lover's rhapsodies, for I find you are dearly beloved in this little corner of paradise, wherein it has been your happy lot to dwell."

Mary laughed softly to herself as she folded the thick sheets of parchment, surmounted, each one, by the Silver Ax. She wrinkled her pretty brow in an effort to discover who the writer could be. She named over to herself, more than one local youth, but grew mirthful at the thought that any of them could have put on paper so much poetry and sentiment.

"He is a very foolish fellow, whoever he may be," Mary said to herself, gazing at the paper in her hand. "He writes to me as if I were a goddess, which is very wrong and absurd. I fear he is but amusing himself with a simple country maiden. Yes, he is very foolish—but he writes well."

And for all her good sense and shrewdness a little smile played about Mary's mouth, as she wondered once again who could have composed these epistles, and repeated softly to herself some of the phrases, declaring that they were very pretty. Mary was kept busy almost every day, for in those times there were no labor-saving appliances for the housewife, and even in the houses of the wealthy there was constant work. To light a fire meant striking flint and igniting tinder. If sugar were needed, a slice had to be cut from the great cake. Candles were homemade, and had to be set in molds, flax was spun, wool carded and dyed with the bark of red oak or hickory, with the juice of the goldenrod mixed with alum and indigo, making an exquisite green, while the poke berry, boiled with alum, gave a rich crimson, and the petals of the iris a soft purple. All this, besides the ordinary domestic labors, gave

employment for every one, and Mary took her full share. So that it was in her hour of leisure, toward sunset, that she read the mysterious documents which she took from their place of concealment in the morning and carried in her bodice all day.

Letter dated July 5:

"Yesterday I sat under a tree to read, Mary. I had a book of Latin verse in my hand, and I strove hard to keep my thoughts upon it. All at once a squirrel came by, busy, the frugal rogue, in laying up stores for the winter. He was a dainty little woodrover, and seemed to have much curiosity concerning me, or perchance, he wanted a peep into the classics. But I shut my book and held speech with him.

"" Wood-ranger,' I asked him, 'do you know one Mary Martin? Has the rustle of her silk gown or the tread of her dainty feet ever affrighted you? Did you note how blue were her eyes, and mistake, perchance, her hair for the tassels of the corn?' He eyed me curiously, as if he were reflecting, and sat upright, at his ease, upon the fence. 'If you have not seen her, most thoughtful rodent, then have you seen none like her. No maiden in all these parts can compare with her, and as she walks these summer woods, there is sweetness unsurpassed in her grave and sober bearing. Perchance, if she spies you, her gravity gives place to smiles, oh happy little rodent. Has she ever sought to make a captive of you, or is she content with the prisoner her golden locks have taken?' Then I told him many more things about you, Mary, which I am unwilling to set down here, lest they might offend you. Well, the squirrel will never reveal my foolish secrets, Mary, not even if you were to beg it of him. He took care that my confidences should not be indefinitely prolonged, having little sympathy with idlers. So when he had gone upon his way, burdened with all my folly, I was left alone with my poet, and I spied out many lines on his page which described you to perfection. So I said them aloud in my foolish ecstasy, over and over again, waking the echoes, those nymphs of long ago who loved and vainly. I am a prolix love-maker, am I not? But then I can not see the pretty yawn, and if you throw down the sheet in weariness, why, the act does not fall upon my heart as though I stood face to face with you, chidden for my lack of wit.

"That is why I hide behind the door of mystery. I can speak, and you, sweet Mary, can not bid me to be still. So shall I tell you everything that is in my heart, as far as written words may do so, before ever you look upon my face. And if you do not read the lines, at least I have written them. I dare not meet you, and so you know me only by the Silver Ax, the symbol of our race, an honest and a gallant one. Would that the ax might hew down all obstacles between you and me, and, then, in some far future, perchance, I might come into your presence and say— But I dare not think of that. God keep you Mary, as He has kept you hitherto, the purest and fairest flower in His creation."

There were no yawns while Mary read these lines; the long lashes lay upon her cheek, as she bent over them, and she pondered upon the strangeness of it all. She strove to picture this unknown lover, seated under the tree with his book of Latin poetry, and to guess what his face might be like, the color of his eyes and hair, and what manner of dress he affected. Her curiosity and interest were rising to fever-heat; would she ever behold this mysterious being, or would he carry on this farce of concealment to the end?

Letter dated August 10:

"Sure you never gave any of my sex more than a passing look or thought, Mary. To you we were as earth worms, busy with trivial matters, while you soared high above us. And the thought of a foolish fellow striving to awaken your interest, kindle your pity, and finally reach the stronghold of your heart, fills you with amusement. You sit serene on your pedestal up yonder, spying me and the rest of my sex from afar, with serious eyes, for you, I make no doubt, are too kind for jest or mockery. But Mary, it is my earnest prayer that you stoop, one day, even so low as to look into my eyes and read there the story I try to tell upon these pages."

Letter dated August 19:

"Have you any curiosity concerning me, Mary? Do you think of me as crabbed and sicklied o'er with the pale hue of

thought? Or as robust of frame, and lover of all outdoor things? Would you have me fair or dark, or of the neutral tints that are known as chestnut? If your favorite type be fair, then must I bewail myself forevermore. If you prefer those of dark complexion, then must I rejoice that my hair is raven black, my eyes to match, and my skin of a dusky olive. I will confess at once, Mary, if you esteem comeliness in our sex as an essential, then must I fall short, for nature has been niggardly, and never could I take my stand as a beauty man to win a woman's favor. Think of me as without personal attractions, and only the wit to know you for the daintiest and most admirable of your sex.

"Last night I stood gazing at the moon, as is a lover's wont. Every lover since the world began has looked unto that sphere of light for I know not what of comfort. Like any other crack-brained fellow, at whom I have often jeered, I apostrophized the goddess of night, and talked such love-nonsense as had sent one to Bedlam if I uttered it in open day. For, if I be wise in aught else, here, at least, I lack wisdom, and here is a curious phase of the lover's madness, that the wisest lady will the most certainly disorder his wits. The moon resembles you, Mary, so high above, so ethereal, sweet and unconscious, shedding around such blessed light, yet leaving us poor men to sigh uncomforted.

"Ah, Mary, Fortune is an ill jade to have made me timorous. A bolder spirit would have ventured into your presence. Had I done so, I must have been struck dumb, and remained mute before you, as the sun-dial in the presence of the sun, which yet is swayed by that luminary and lives but to reflect him. Adieu, Mary! That is a pretty word the French have, and I will borrow it and write it down here under our American oaks, in this forest of Vermont. Mary, 'tis the one name. I have always loved it, first for Her whom we all in common reverence, and who has been, sweet Mary, your model, I make sure. In your prayers, at least, have a thought of me. Adieu, Mary, adieu."

A letter dated August 23 refers to that year being the initial one of the century:

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"The dawning of a new century, Mary, has brought me a

new hope, a new horizon, full of roseate clouds. Your delicious image has arisen on it, so fresh, so pure, so undisturbed by the world and its storms. I pray you, Mary, to read this at sunsetting and to give me in the spirit a few moments of your company. I feel that I can not much longer do without you, and then will come the crisis, when I may lose all. Turn your thoughts toward me, Mary, and let them be gracious, with some tenderness, if it may be. My thoughts shall be going to meet yours with great love. To begin the century with this light upon it is a great matter for me. You are as a beacon, sweet child, to a world-worn wanderer. Nor can you quite extinguish this light, even though you withdraw all hope, for love is as the glowworm and must shine from its nature. Be kind, then, be pitiful; think of the great love that guides my pen. I grow more bold as my love intensifies, and I ask myself, shall I spend any years of this century in the light of Mary's eyes? Some day, and that day may not be far distant, I shall walk into your presence. May your heart have softened toward me before then. Farewell, Mary, Mary!"

That these letters were having their almost certain effect upon a girl who had led a secluded life, with scarce any companions of her own age, may be gathered from the dread which was awakened in her mind during those last days of August. In an interview with her father, he reminded her that she was to all intents and purposes betrothed to the son of his old friend, Robert Barron. This young gentleman had long been abroad, and Mary scarcely remembered to have seen him.

"Of course, I can not force your inclination," her father had said, "but this union was agreed upon between the parents on both sides, and has not only our hearty sanction, but I shall regard it as a real misfortune if you should refuse to ratify the agreement. Financially, it will be of the greatest aid to me, as I tell you in confidence that my affairs have become somewhat involved. Arthur Esmonde Barron, the son, is a fine fellow. I have always heard the best accounts of him, so that you will be a lucky girl. But the weightiest reason for my choice remains untold.

He is a Catholic, and there is none other in the State whom it would befit your station to wed."

"But, but, Mr. Barron himself?" inquired Mary.

"Oh, he has returned this week. I have had a letter from him, and he expresses his entire willingness to fulfil that old contract, provided only your full and free consent can be obtained. Otherwise he will not present himself."

"Father, I can not for the present at least," Mary stammered out. "I will explain, but tell Mr. Barron that circumstances have made it impossible."

And to her father's amazement, she hurriedly left the room. After that she went about very sadly for a day or two. Her father forbore to question her for the time being, and she presently received this letter, dated August 29:

"I could not read my poetry to-day, Mary, because none of the lines, in any measure, expressed my feeling. Nor could I make you fit them any more. So I turned to nature, and in its beauty saw you. You are more lovely in your sadness than even in your joy. I saw upon your cheek a tear, and it wounded me to the heart while it filled me with joy. Can I guess why you weep? Ay, truly, for whatever concerns you is whispered to me by the very birds in the tree-tops. I feel it in the air. It thrills in the song of the nightingale. I rejoice, Mary, oh, how I rejoice, that you have, for the present at least, refused to fulfil that old-time contract. For it fills me with hope that my letters may not have left your heart untouched. Oh, if I could believe that true, a hundred contracts, a thousand suitors could not keep me from your side. Your father alleges as a grave and first reason that you must marry a Catholic. But, if there are none other in the State who may aspire to your hand, there are other States, Mary, and other Catholics in them. Mary, the moment has come when, if you have any hope to give me, you must cast maidenly shyness aside. If I have any interest in your heart, let me know it without delay, lest our two lives be wrecked. If, on the other hand, these letters have been fruitless, leave one line in the summer house to declare that it is by no means on account of them that the contract remains unfulfilled, and that they had better cease. It has come to that, Mary. Either I must have more or nothing. Alas, how slight is my hope that these lifeless letters have touched your heart! And yet but one word and my Silver Ax will chop down every obstacle between us. Oh, that that divine tear had fallen for me or that a ray of pity would shine upon my loneliness! But I have marked you at church with reverent awe, and felt my own unworthiness. I have watched you visiting the poor, ministering to the sick. You will be one day the strong and valiant woman, a bulwark of strength to some happy husband. Mary, all nature is singing your praises, and my heart cries loudest of all."

At dusk that evening, Mary, with scarlet cheeks and head bowed, as if she were a culprit, stole to the summer house and left a paper there. It held but a few words:

"If Silver Ax would but come forth from behind the door of concealment, and let M. M. see him once, it might help in a decision she will have to make."

How full was the summer night of sweetness, the gorgeous, glowing stars shining in the azure depths, the scent of a thousand flowers, the warm breath of the night wind, vibrating with the strange witchery of the hour. Mary stood still, sighing happily. She felt that a crisis had come. If Silver Ax did not appear, she must never read his letters more, but putting aside this idle romance, accept seriously and solemnly the life partner chosen for her. But if he came and talked as he wrote, if his character, station, and religion were all that she desired, why, there would be a conscientious reason against marrying another. The slip of paper was gone next morning, but there was no answer, and Mary, with a new and painful feeling of utter despondency, began to fear that this course had been distasteful to Silver Ax, who seemed to love silence and mystery best. As she sat in the summer house that morning, she knew that the mysterious personality of Silver Ax had become dearer to her than anything else, and with the cessation of his letters, a strong and vital interest would have passed from her life. On the following day she received orders to prepare for a visit from Mr. Barron.

"I can not tell why he comes, since I could give him no encouragement, but so it is," said Mary's father. Very sadly the girl put on her gown of sky-blue taffeta and white muslin kerchief, feeling as if she were dressing for the sacrifice. As she waited with her father in the stately drawing-room, a carriage drew up to the door, heavy and old-fashioned, drawn by fine horses. Thence alighted a tall man, somewhere in the thirties, slender of frame and of much distinction of bearing. He wore a scarlet coat, white satin embroidered waistcoat, black satin breeches, white silk stockings and buckled shoes. It was the dress worn by men of fashion in town. Mary's heart beat fast and her father's first words to the stranger sent the kot blood to her cheeks:

"Ah, my boy, it does me good to see the old coach drive about again, with the Silver Ax on its panels. But how long have you been home?"

The stranger was for a moment embarrassed, but he answered, presently:

"I have been home something more than three months. I have had reasons for keeping quiet."

His eyes were on Mary, and it seemed as if he could see nothing else. Mr. Martin, astonished, answered somewhat coldly:

"I have no desire, sir, to penetrate into your private affairs." The young man cast a look at Mary.

"Perhaps Miss Martin understands my reasons."

His glance had a magnetic quality in it, which compelled the girl to look up.

"I think I do," she said, presently, blushing deeply and dropping her eyes.

Meanwhile the father looked on with a half smile.

"You deal in mysteries," he said, "but I can perceive by my daughter's countenance and your own, Mr. Barron, that there will be no great obstacles to the fulfilment of the contract."

"No, sir," said Arthur Barron, with a bow, "we are prepared to fulfil the contract as speedily as possible. It rejoices me to hope that I have hewn away all obstacles with my Silver Ax."

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF BARBARA MARCHMONT.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

"Who is that gentleman, Selina?"

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Lady Selina Dunstable turned to the girl who occupied the seat by her side in her pony phaeton. A moment before the elder lady had pulled up her tiny steeds to exchange a few words with the gentleman Ethel Creighton referred to.

"That! I thought you knew him! He is Geoffrey Eversley, of Kingscombe."

"How solemnly you say it, Selina! Pray what is he remarkable in? He is a very good-looking man, I admit."

"And very good, also. He is the largest land-holder in the county and a Catholic."

" Oh!"

"Yes, the Eversleys have been Catholics always. At Kingscombe, a charming old place full of quaint nooks and hidingplaces, there is a room where priests were wont to hide in the old times."

"Is Mr. Eversley popular in the neighborhood?" Miss Creighton asked. Her own home was in the English Midlands, and the only Catholics she had met were a few Irish laborers.

"Indeed he is," Lady Selina answered. "Very popular. There isn't a marriageable girl of my acquaintance, either Catholic or Protestant, but would grasp at the chance of becoming mistress of Kingscombe."

"Then Mr. Eversley isn't married," Miss Creighton said.

"No, nor do I expect he will marry." Lady Selina's bright

face clouded over. "He does not forget Barbara Marchmont. She was to have been his wife."

- "Did she die?" Miss Creighton asked, in a lowered tone.
- "No; if she had perhaps he would have forgotten."
- "Did she marry some other person?"
- "I don't know."
- "How mysterious! Come, Selina, be charitable. You know I am of an exceedingly curious disposition naturally. What became of Barbara Marchmont?"
- "She disappeared on the eve of the day on which she was to have been married," Lady Selina explained. "And," she paused a moment and puckered her white brows, "that is just six years ago this very day."
 - "Well?" interrogatively.
- "I'll just tell you the whole story." Lady Selina loosened the reins and allowed the ponies to move on at a sober pace. "You know that pretty cottage where Mrs. Brown lives now?"

Miss Creighton nodded.

- "Well, it had been vacant for a long time when we learned it was let to a widow named Marchmont, and immediately on the announcement it was taken possession of by Mrs. Marchmont and her daughter. I was not a year married then, and I found the country so dull that even the arrival of a widow and her daughter roused in me some excitement. I cannot tell you how disappointed I was when it was known that the new arrivals were Catholics."
 - " Why?"
- "I really can not explain. Perhaps I had some thought of making a friend and companion of Miss Marchmont; perhaps because I was, and am, a little narrow-minded and intolerant."
 - "But Mr. Eversley is a Catholic."
- "Oh, that was different. The Eversleys were people of position. Well, for a time the mother and daughter were left to themselves; nor did they seem to consider that any particular hardship. They were devoted to each other. Mrs. Marchmont

was a little delicate, and had no wish to see much society; and Barbara found enough enjoyment in her books and music. I was the first," Lady Selina went on, "to discover that Geoffrey had fallen in love with Barbara, and I forgave him the indiscretion. She was very beautiful. Picture to yourself a tall, slender girl of twenty with delicate, clear-cut features, lit up by eyes of changeful gray. Her hair was of that rare hue which the old Venetians loved to paint, and her manner unaffected and refined. She had been educated in a French convent, and possessed that mingled simplicity and dignity that convent-bred girls so often have. Geoffrey's wooing was not a long one, and it was at a small dance given by me that the two became engaged."

"And his people—he had people, I suppose—did they approve?" Miss Creighton inquired.

"His only relative was his mother. I do not think she was pleased with her son's choice, but he was of age to judge for himself, and Mrs. Eversley tried to be satisfied. Well, they were engaged, as I said; but on the very next day Mrs. Marchmont was taken suddenly ill, and before the end of the week Barbara was an orphan. Geoffrey pleaded hard that the marriage should not be postponed unduly, and Barbara agreed that it should take place before the ensuing Advent. It was to be a very quiet affair. The arrangements were all completed, the little Catholic church was adorned with flowers, the few old friends of the Eversleys domiciled at Kingscombe, Geoffrey had parted from Barbara on the wedding eve, and she was then in her usual spirits, but when her old nurse went to wake her on her wedding morn she found her mistress gone. Afterward we heard she had left for London by the first train in the morning."

"How did Mr. Eversley take it?"

"Badly; but he gave up none of his usual avocations, and was returned as our Parliamentary representative at the next general election."

"Did he never hear from Barbara?" Lady Selina shook her head. "I think not. Indeed, I am certain he did not. There is the whole story for you, Ethel."

"Were there no conjectures, no surmises?"

"Oh, certainly; and all equally baseless. What grieved Geoffrey most, I think, was the fact that Barbara had little money in her purse, and that she would be under the necessity of earning her living. Mrs. Marchmont's annuity had died with her."

"And you think Mr. Eversley will never marry?"

"Never, except he marries Barbara Marchmont, and that's not likely." Lady Selina cracked her whip and addressed her ponies, "Come, Dot, come, Dido; the sun has gone down, and two miles between us and home."

When Geoffrey Eversley had greeted Lady Selina Dunstable and passed on, he did not take the turning in the road that would have brought him to the entrance of Kingscombe. Instead, he turned into a less frequented path. He remembered only too well that the day was the anniversary of what was to have been his wedding day, and he was puzzling, as he had often done, over Barbara's strange disappearance. He had been able to trace her to London without any difficulty, but that was all. Mrs. Marchmont's old servant had been as much perplexed as any one over the occurrence. She had gone to the village on some business on the memorable evening, and on her return Miss Marchmont was in her own room, and but a few words had been exchanged between them. It had been Geoffrey's care to see that the old servant was established in comfortable quarters at Kingscombe. She had her own rooms there, and the savings that had accumulated during her service with Mrs. Marchmont lay undisturbed in the bank where she had placed them.

Geoffrey walked onward quickly. The road he had taken lay through a wide and far-spreading moor where human habitations were few. As he moved forward with downbent head, he did not notice the tints taken by the clumps of heather as the sun sank in red and purple clouds, nor the grotesque shapes the stunted trees and shrubs assumed in the fast gathering gloom. Suddenly the silence was broken by a piercing scream, and Geoffrey stood still and recalled his wandering thoughts. The cry came from a small cottage that stood a few paces back from the roadway. A woman named Mrs. Crewe, who earned a living by dressmaking, lived in it, Geoffrey recollected.

"Help, help! For God's sake, help!" a woman's voice cried, and Geoffrey grasped his stick firmly and strode toward the house. He knew the woman lived alone, and he had no doubt but some tramp had entered the cottage with felonious intent.

"Stop screaming," another voice, and that a masculine one

said. "Write as I bid you or it will be worse for you."

"I won't," the first voice said, "you've robbed Miss Marchmont long enough."

Geoffrey paused as the name reached his ears, and again a cry sounded on the night air.

"Do you want to kill me? Oh, help!"

In an instant Geoffrey was in the house, with his hand grasping the collar of the man's coat. The woman had recoiled backward at his entrance.

"Drop that knife!" Geoffrey ordered, and the man let the carving knife he held in his right hand fall on the floor.

"What account do you give of yourself?" Geoffrey demanded, retaining his grip on the man's collar.

"It was only a jest, sir, nothing more," the ruffian explained in a cowed tone. "Jane will tell you it was only a jest."

Geoffrey turned his glance to Mrs. Crewe. "It was no jest," the woman said, "but he is my husband."

"Oh!" Geoffrey exclaimed, "I understood-"

"Yes, I know. I said I was a widow. That was not true. I am George Harper's unfortunate wife," the woman interrupted, speaking rapidly, and Geoffrey's hand fell to his side.

"Still a husband has no right to treat his wife as he was treating you," Geoffrey said, "and he should not go unpunished."

"Oh, no, no, Mr. Eversley!" the woman cried. "I could not prosecute him. I only ask him to leave me in peace."

The man muttered something which Geoffrey did not catch.

"I will not write," the woman said. "I did so too often."

"You spoke of Miss Marchmont just now," Geoffrey said. "What do you know of her?"

"Nothing, sir," the man replied hastily. "That name was

not mentioned."

The woman was silent, and Geoffrey thrust his hand into his pocket.

"See here, my man," Geoffrey held forth half a dozen yellow coins; "if you can tell me anything of Barbara Marchmont these are yours."

The man's eyes glistened, but he hesitated.

"Tell him all," his wife urged, "Mr. Eversley is a gentleman, and you can trust him, George."

"You will not use my statement against me?" George Har-

per questioned. Geoffrey shook his head.

"I can not promise."

"Well, no matter. I am a ticket-of-leave man."

Geoffrey was not surprised at the information.

"When I came out of prison six years ago, I set out for this part of the world. I knew Jane, my wife, was settled here somewhere, and earning money; but I made a mistake in seeking her house. Instead of coming here, I went to the house Miss Marchmont lived in," the man continued.

"Well?" Geoffrey asked.

"We had one daughter at the time I was sentenced. I know now she died soon afterward, but then I did not. I waited till dusk and entered the house where Miss Marchmont lived. I asked where her mother was, and was told she was dead. Then I informed her I was her convict father."

"You scoundrel!" Geoffrey exclaimed.

The man smiled sinisterly.

"Well, perhaps I thought she was my daughter, perhaps I did not; but at any rate, I saw by the appearance of the house that she was in comfortable circumstances, and I thought it was no harm to try what I could make of her. I soon saw the girl knew little of her own father, and that the little she did know tended to corroborate my words. She gave me a five pound note, and begged me to go away at once, offering to meet me in London in a few days' time. Of course I took the money and met her. She was greatly changed, even in a few days. I should say I had seen Jane in the meantime, and heard our child was dead."

Geoffrey signed to the speaker to proceed.

"The girl wanted me to live with her in some quiet country place and to turn over a new leaf." The man laughed at the recollection "Oh, she was an innocent! That didn't suit my book, so I took what money she could give me, and since she has sent me a small sum quarterly. There, you know all."

"Where is she?" Geoffrey asked, and Harper replied: "You'll

have to pay for the knowledge."

"She is in Ireland, as governess, in a place called Westport," the woman said. "Many a time I was tempted to tell you, Mr. Eversley, but I feared George would kill me. Now and then he came here to get me to write in the name of some landlady to Miss Marchmont, telling her of his sickness in order to get more money from her."

"If I had been a scholar I would have done my own writing," the man observed sullenly, "but I never could form a letter."

George Harper left the cottage half an hour later, having solemnly promised to trouble his wife no more, and the next day Geoffrey Eversley started for Westport. Before he left Kingscombe he had a few minutes' conversation with Mrs. Marchmont's old servant. She wondered greatly why Mr. Eversley should inquire about her late mistress' husband, but she answered his question at once.

"Mr. Marchmont! Well, sir, the poor gentleman, to tell the truth, was overfond of a glass of wine, and when he lost his property in some mining speculation he became more intemperate, and at the end his mind gave way. My mistress had to place him in a private asylum, and he died while Miss Marchmont was at school in France. Her mother never spoke of him to her, and I had orders not to do so."

"Ah! that explains," Geoffrey said to himself. "My poor Barbara!"

Miss Creighton's visit to Lady Selina Dunstable was not at an end when the news came of the marriage of Geoffrey Eversley and Barbara Marchmont. Lady Selina came in from making a round of afternoon calls with the tidings.

"They were married in some remote corner of Connemara, I hear," Lady Selina said. "Every one is wondering what the mystery was; but I am delighted. You remember, Ethel, I said Geoffrey would marry Barbara, or no one?"

"Oh, yes," Ethel assented, and added: "We shall have you posing as a prophetess next."

At that same moment Geoffrey was saying to his wife:

"But why did you go away, Barbara? You might have trusted me."

Barbara laughed tearfully.

"I knew you would still want to marry me, and I thought the best plan was to go away. The daughter of a convict should not be your wife. Oh, Geoffrey, he was a dreadful man, and as poor mamma never spoke to me of my father I believed all he told me."

"Thank God I met him!" Geoffrey said.

A PEARL NECKLACE.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

"Just try a spoonful of this soup, Miss Courteney, and a bit of the breast of the chicken, do now," Mrs. Mahon urged; and Hilda Courteney raised herself from the well-worn sofa on which she lay at the entreaty of her kindly Irish landlady.

"I will," she said, "but you must tell me who is paying for all the delicacies I have had during my illness and since. I have asked you before, but you put me off. Now, Mrs. Mahon?"

Mrs. Mahon lifted a cushion that had fallen from the sofa, patted, and replaced it before she said:

"Listen to her, then! Sure a sparrow would eat more than you do."

"Well, who is paying?"

"Faith, then, if you must have an answer, 'tis myself that pays for the few things—"

"Few things! Jellies, soups, wine, not to speak of constant nursing and attendance!"

"Arrah, what a fuss about nothing! Sure you'll soon pay it all back when you begin to give the music lessons again. Not that you should begin for a while yet," Mrs. Mahon added, hastily. "And here's one of them weekly papers about lords and ladies—I can't abide them myself. Give me the Weekly Freeman and home news for Sunday reading, and I'm satisfied. Well, well, if that's all the harm you're going to do I'll take the tray off with me."

Hilda Courteney's face wore a doleful enough look when Mrs. Mahon had closed the door behind her. Her father had been a London merchant, and his one child had been brought up to consider herself an heiress. At his death, however, he was bankrupt, and Hilda found herself obliged to earn her living. She had received an excellent musical training, and some friends exerted themselves to find her pupils. For two or three years she managed to get along in a sort of fashion; but lack of nourishing food, and constant exposure to rain and cold slowly but surely broke down a none too vigorous constitution. She had no provision made for the proverbial rainy day when her illness came. Mrs. Mahon, in spite of a long residence in London, retained much of her Irish brogue, and all her Irish warmth of heart, and cared for the sick girl as if she were her own, and had drawn on her own scanty savings to defray the medical and other expenses of her lodger's illness.

"Mrs. Mahon must have spent a good deal upon me," Hilda thought with a sigh. "Even were I at work again I should find it difficult to repay her. I wish-oh, where's the good in wishing!" Hilda Courteney was naturally hopeful and brave, but the tears gathered and fell as she thought over her position. It was to distract her gloomy imaginings that she lifted the paper Mrs. Mahon had left. It was a weekly magazine that bore the name of the Globe, and it contained much information concerning the doings of the smart people in society. One page was devoted to the advertising of various articles—chiefly of dress or jewelry—which the owners wished to dispose of. One lady offered a set of Russian sables for half their value, another a gold watch as good as new, and so on. Hilda looked at the list of articles offered for sale, and suddenly started. A flush of color rose to her pale cheeks as she opened a drawer and took from it a small wooden box. The box contained a pearl necklace.

"I never thought of it!" she exclaimed. "The one wedding present I was forced to keep. Walter's aun't must have paid a good deal for it. If I could dispose of it! Perhaps if I advertised it in the *Globe* I might find a purchaser."

She fingered the stones lovingly. Two years before her father's death she had been engaged to be married to Walter

Leigh. The wedding day was fixed, the wedding guests invited, when the match was broken off.

"I don't like parting with it," she said aloud, "but I must. It is the only article of value I possess."

The advertisement she wrote out that night duly appeared in the weekly periodical; and a few days later Hilda received a letter signed Mary Dunstable, and dated from a fashionable London square. The writer mentioned a firm of bankers as reference, and asked to have the necklace forwarded on approval. Hilda managed to convey her parcel to the nearest post office, and registered it. The day was wet, and the first result of her walk was a cold that she found it difficult to shake off. Mrs. Mahon scolded and lamented, and was extremely indignant at Hilda's action.

"If I had known what you'd be up to I should have thought twice before buying that trashy paper," she said. "Like as not you'll never see your necklace nor its value. The world's full of swindlers."

In the meantime the necklace journeyed first to Miss Dunstable's London home, and from there to the country house she was visiting. She opened the box at the Woodside breakfast table, and gave a little cry of rapture. Her hostess, a sweet-faced woman of about sixty, looked up from the letter she was reading; and the only other person at the table raised his eyebrows inquiringly. Mary Dunstable explained to Walter Leigh and his aunt.

"Isn't it lovely? Oh, it must be worth much more money than is asked for it. Mustn't it, Mrs. Leigh?"

Mrs. Leigh took the necklace in her hands and examined it. Walter gave his attention to his ham and eggs, till Mrs. Leigh in her turn gave a surprised cry, and turned to him.

"Walter, do you recognize this?"

"Is it Mary's necklace, aunt?" The gentleman held out his hand. "Why, it surely is the one you gave—Hilda!"

"It is. I am quite certain." Aunt and nephew looked at each other.

"Have you seen it before?" Mary Dunstable asked. "It isn't stolen property, is it?"

"No, no," Mrs. Leigh answered rather hastily. "Oh, no, of course not. May I see the letter that accompanied the necklace?"

"Certainly." The speaker handed the note she had received from Hilda to her hostess. That lady read it through.

"Hilda must be in some difficulties when she tries to sell my necklace," she said. "I heard somewhere that she was left quite unprovided for at her father's death."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter now," Walter Leigh said hastily. The next moment he rose from the table, and left the room.

"Poor fellow!" Mrs. Leigh said. "He hasn't got over it yet. Of course you don't understand, Mary. It all happened when you were in the school-room."

"That isn't so long ago," Mary Dunstable laughed.

"No. You know that Walter's mother and I married two brothers. Poor Clara died when her second baby was born. Both Walter and Julian were, naturally enough, often here."

Mary nodded.

"Where is Julian?" she asked.

"He is dead, my dear. I am afraid we all combined to spoil him, and when he grew up he gave his father much trouble. He gambled and betted. He was very pleasant and fascinating when he pleased, and was, I am sure, more weak than wicked. His father paid his debts for him time after time. In the end he went to Australia and died there."

There was a silence, which Mary Dunstable broke by asking, while a flush rose to her clear olive cheek:

"About Walter-and this Hilda?"

"Oh, it was of that I meant to speak. Walter was engaged some years ago to Hilda Courteney. Her father was supposed to be very wealthy, and Hilda was a very beautiful and accomplished girl."

"Why was 'the engagement broken off?" Mary Dunstable knew very well why Mrs. Leigh had invited her to meet her nephew; and she was not at all averse to fall in with the elder lady's plan.

"The details of the marriage were all arranged. It was to take place at Leigh Hall by the express desire of Walter's father. A week or so before the wedding day some valuable family jewels were stolen. They were taken one evening when we were all at dinner except Hilda, who was in her room with a headache. Some of the servants caught a glimpse of the thief, and one declared Miss Courteney had spoken to him. Hilda did not deny the truth of the maid's statement; but she refused utterly to say anything of the matter. Walter begged her to speak, but she kept obstinately silent. Both Walter and she were hot-tempered and young, my dear. They quarreled bitterly, and the match was broken off. Hilda wished me to take back the necklace you have there, and which I had given her. With much difficulty I induced her to keep it. I was very fond of the girl." Mrs. Leigh sighed.

"Was the thief found out?"

"No, nor were the jewels recovered. Walter and his father were anxious to find them. There were circumstances connected with them which made them of double value in their eyes."

"And Miss Courteney?"

"Passed out of our lives. We heard of her father's death from some one. Walter has ever since had a prejudice against all feminine society—that is, till lately."

Mary Dunstable carried the necklace to her room. She was trying to fasten its clasp around her neck when she upset the box which it had come in, and the velvet bottom fell out. She stooped to pick it up, and saw that a thin sheet of paper also lay on the ground, and unthinkingly she opened it, reading the first words of a letter written five years before. It began:

"Dear Hilda: You are a brick; but I promise you I shall turn over a new leaf when I reach the Southern continent. I will, indeed. You know I couldn't give back the family gewgaws. What use were they to Walter or my father? If any one feels their loss it will be you, and I know you won't grudge them to me."

The girl read so far, and let the paper drop from her hand. Then she lifted it, and turned to the last page. It was signed "Julian Leigh."

"So it was Walter's brother took the jewels; and Miss Courteney would not say who the thief was, though she lost Walter thereby." A sad little smile passed over the girl's face. "Well, he may be restored to her. If I don't put this letter out of my possession at once I may be tempted to destroy it. So here goes."

Mary entered the library in response to its occupant's impatient "Come in," and Walter rose from his seat not too readily.

"Look!" Mary held out the letter. "It was in the box with the necklace. Oh, read it, read it!" Walter was handing back the paper. "It concerns you. Read it. I suppose *she* did not know the letter was in the box. Don't be absurd, but read it."

Mary rushed from the room. She was not seen by any of the household till luncheon time. She felt she had acted rightly, yet her eyes were suspiciously red when she joined Mrs. Leigh at table. That lady bestowed her entire attention on her plate.

"Oh, yes," she said, hurriedly, "Walter told me. He's off to London. Poor Hilda! Yet she ought to have spoken—one shouldn't take things in one's own hands." Mrs. Leigh was thinking of Mary as well as Hilda. "I am going to pay some calls, Mary. Will you come?"

"Yes, certainly," Mary answered promptly.

That same evening Mrs. Mahon was astonished not a little by the arrival of a visitor for Miss Courteney. She eyed the gentleman doubtfully.

"Miss Courteney isn't at all well," she said, "and I don't know if your visit might be pleasant to her or not."

Walter Leigh smiled.

"I don't think it will be unpleasant—at least I hope not," he said, and Mrs. Mahon moved aside, and pointed to the staircase.

"The door at the top of the landing," she said. "Now I trust I've done right!"

Mrs. Mahon was satisfied on that point when, an hour later, she was introduced to Mr. Leigh.

"I can not thank you sufficiently for all your kindness to Hilda," he said, holding her hand in a warm clasp. "I have just given her three days in which to prepare for our wedding."

SUSY DARRAGH'S STORY.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

The change that ten years of toil and sorrow had made in Susy Darragh, combined with Jane Brannigan's failing sight, prevented the latter from recognizing the former when they met, one March morning, by the fire that burned behind the wire guard in Drumcross workhouse infirmary. Susy, on the contrary, at once knew her former acquaintance; but the woman with the prematurely gray hair and bright sunken eyes, that told of the disease from which she suffered, had no wish to be known as the once light-hearted Susy Darragh, who had been the prettiest girl in Shangannon; and who had often bestowed some of her hard-earned pence on Jane, who had been nearly all her life "a poor person." In Shangannon, as in Father Russell's quaint old house by the sea, the word beggar was under ban.

"Have you been long here?" the elder woman asked.

"Three or four months," Susy replied shortly.

"Dear knows, I never expected to end my days here!" Jane lamented. "I was born in Shangannon of decent parents. Were you ever there? Your voice sounds familiar."

A fit of coughing gave Susy an excuse for making no reply, and Jane went on:

"Faith, that's the bad cough entirely! Does the doctor give you nothing for it?"

"Aye; but Dr. Murray says it is in consumption I am. There's no cure for that."

Jane shook her head. "'Tis the rheumatics in my heart that brought me here; and, troth, I'd rather be elsewhere."

Susy did not speak for some minutes. Suddenly she asked: "What sort of place did you come from?"

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- "From Shangannon. It is a village; but I haven't been there for a good bit. The woman I stayed with, Mrs. Neill—and by a chance only she was that—said she'd rather have my room than my company."
 - "Mrs. Neill!"
 - "Aye. Steve Neill's wife. Do you know her?"
 - "I've heard the name."
- "She's mighty genteel now, since Steve has begun to work for himself. Well, only for me she'd be Honor Kerrigan still!"
- "How was that?" the younger woman questioned with restrained curiosity.
- "I suppose there's no harm in telling you," Jane Brannigan said. "You wouldn't tell the police?"

Susy made a negative gesture.

- "Well, anyway, I needn't care," Jane went on with mingled defiance and regret. "I'm not long for this world. It'll be ten years ago some of these days since Miss Moore got married. She was the well-liked lady, and the wedding presents she got couldn't be counted. There was a girl named Susy Darragh back and forward about the house sewing. She, too, was about to be married to one Steve Neill."
- "Well?" The younger woman's sunken eyes devoured her companion's face. The latter, engrossed in her story-telling, did not notice the glance.
- "Honor Kerrigan was a servant in Colonel Moore's; and she always had a fair word and something tasty for me when I called —I got my living from house to house, you know."

Susy nodded.

"Well, a bit before Miss Moore's wedding, Honor gave me a small packet, and asked me to drop it in Susy Darragh's box. Susy was alone in the world and lodged with a cousin of mine. Honor said it was a bit of joke they were playing on Susy. I did as she asked, and the next day Honor sent me on a message to her mother, who lived a dozen miles off. Mrs. Kerrigan made me stay three or four days, and when I got back to Shangannon it was all over."

- "It! What?"
- "Why, the row about Miss Moore's diamond brooch. There was some doubt cast on Susy; and the police got the brooch right enough in the box where I had left it."
 - "You left it!"
- "It was in the packet. I thought it was some brass affair when I stole a peep at it. Oh, bad as I am, I wouldn't have helped Honor Kerrigan to a man at the cost of sending Susy Darragh to jail."
 - "She was sent to jail?"
- "For twelve months. Steve Neill was terribly annoyed at first; but he was married to Honor before Susy's time was half through."
 - " Well?"
- "At first Mrs. Neill was mighty civil to me. I helped her about the house. Then she showed me the door."
- "But why didn't you speak? Why didn't you clear the girl? What sort of woman were you?"

Jane whimpered:

"You needn't get so angry. Sure, Honor frightened me, and said I'd be sent to jail, too. And she sent me back to her mother's for a bit."

Susy Darragh rocked herself to and fro. "If you had spoken! If you had!" she moaned.

- "What in the world is it to you?"
- "Oh, nothing! But would you keep to what you say?"
- "If there was need for it; but I heard long since that Susy Darragh was dead."
 - "Dead! Oh, aye, the best of her died."
 - "What do you say?"
- "Nothing at all." Susy got up from her seat, and went to the ward where she slept. It took her but a few minutes to array herself in her out-door garments and seek the matron. The latter lifted her hands in astonishment when Susy told her she was leaving.

"'Tis mad you are! Why are you going away?"

"I have got work to do," Susy replied sullenly. She had a few shillings, sufficient to defray the cost of her journey to Shangannon, and that same evening she was in her native village. She had no difficulty in learning where Stephen Neill lived.

"He lives just beyond the chapel," the man to whom she put

her question answered.

Susy nodded and took the well-remembered road. The brown thorns on each hand were showing their tender buds of green, and from the poplars that had grown so tall since she last saw them, larks and blackbirds were joining in their evening song of praise. Something of the peace and calm of the evening fell on Susy, and when she reached the little white-washed chapel she entered it and knelt involuntarily. The prayers she had so long neglected rose to her lips. "'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us,'" Susy repeated and paused. "No, no," she said. "I won't forgive that woman."

A few steps brought her from the little church to the house where Stephen Neill lived. The purple dusk of the March evening had fallen, and as she approached the house, a light sprang up within. Susy stopped as the interior was revealed to her, and drew a quick breath. The peat fire on the wide, open hearth was burning cheerily, and by it the master of the house-in his working attire—sat. A child of three years old or so was on his knee, exhibiting some treasures in the way of bits of tin and pieces of string to the father's loving eyes. Beneath the spot where the paraffine lamp swung, a table was laid for two; and the poor wayfarer's eyes noted half unconsciously the white cloth, the bright knives and spoons and shining earthenware tea service. A pat of yellow butter lay on a glass plate flanked on two sides by plates bearing substantial slices of home-made bread. While Susy still gazed, a woman well preserved and comely came from an inner room with a jug of cream in her hand, and a little girl by her side.

"Now, Steve," she said, loudly enough for Susy to hear; "tea's ready. Bernard, get off your father's knee. He's too tired to nurse a big boy like you. Honor, reach the potato scone."

The little girl conveyed the buttered cake from the hearth to the table, and the mistress of the house, after a quick glance into the brown teapot by the fire, bore it to its place. Susy moved from the window toward the door, hot anger in her heart.

"What will Steve say when he hears what I have to tell?" she muttered to herself and paused. "Aye, what will he say!" She turned again to the uncurtained window. Husband and wife were laughing over the efforts of the little boy to convey his mug of tea to his mouth; and the unseen watcher marked Stephen's proud glance as it passed from mother to son.

"What will he look like when I tell him?" she murmured. "I'll destroy his happiness and gain nothing. But she'll be happy, too—I must tell." Susy half-turned from the window. "'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.' That's in our prayers."

The gloom deepened, and the March wind blew colder across the open country. Susy began, in spite of herself, to cough.

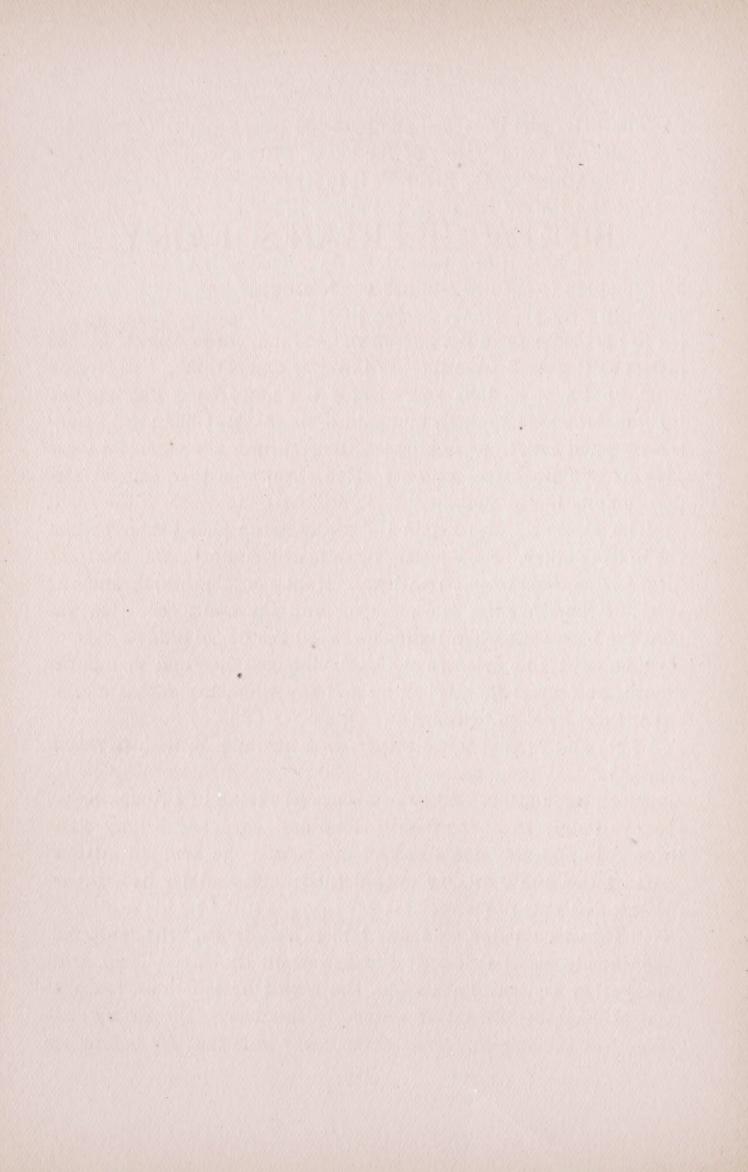
"Listen, Steve," she heard Mrs. Neill say in her high-pitched voice. "There's some one outside," and she had barely time to gain the high road when Stephen opened the door.

"Halloo!" he cried to the vanishing figure. "Do you want anything?" But Susy, choking and coughing, hastened on past the little church and toward the village. Suddenly she staggered and fell; and at that minute the parish priest happened to come forward.

When Susy recovered her senses she was lying in a comfortable room in Father Downey's house; and a doctor was beside her. She listened impatiently while he spoke.

"I know I'm dying," she said calmly. "And I only want a priest," and Father Downey sat far into the night by his penitent.

She died next day, and was laid to rest in the little churchyard, within stone throw of Stephen Neill's house; but no one save Father Downey knows who sleeps in that lonely grave.



BIDDY GILLIGAN'S FAIRY.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

Some time or other, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon of each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Pat Nealon reached the little cabin where Biddy Gilligan lived. Pat was one of the local letter carriers attached to the post-office in Lisnaskerry; and for the modest sum of ten shillings a week he, on these days, distributed the contents of the brown leather bag he carried among the inhabitants of the district lying south of the small provincial town. By the time Pat's wanderings had brought him to Biddy's abode he was usually ravenously hungry; and the sight of the cracked brown earthenware teapot on the hearth and the big blue bowl on the table was to him a pleasant one. He was far enough advanced in years to be interested in Biddy's talk of bygone days, and remembered as middle-aged men and women the youths and maidens who had been Biddy's contemporaries, and of whom she loved to discourse.

The wind was blowing boisterously one late March afternoon, and Pat had long been due at Biddy's cabin, according to its inmate's calculation. She was a bent old woman of perhaps eighty years of age, with snow-white hair and curiously bright black eyes. As she sat on a stool by the hearth she kept an anxious look on the small window by which the letter carrier had to pass before reaching the door.

"It takes Pat longer than ever on his rounds," she muttered, querulously, as she placed a fresh sod on the fire. Then, with many a groan and ejaculation, she raised herself from her seat and hobbled, by the aid of a stick, to the door. The spring sunshine was turning the gorse of the rocky hills that lay before her

door to yellow gold, and Biddy gazed round her for a moment with a faint joy in the return of spring.

"Yonder he is at last," she remarked to herself as Pat came into view. A few moments brought him to the street.

"I was near giving you up, man," Biddy said, in tones of mingled welcome and fault-finding. "It must be long after three o'clock."

"It wants a minute of three;" Pat consulted the watch he carried, "a minute exactly."

"It must be more," the old woman disputed. "Anyway the kettle's on the boil this hour past, so come in."

The pair entered the house, and Pat produced two miniature packages containing tea and sugar, and a buttered bun from the bag he carried, and proceeded to prepare his meal. Biddy had taken her seat by the fire.

"There's milk in the bowl," she said.

"All right," Pat responded. "Nothing strange?"

"Oh, nothing particular. The new curate was in yesterday evening and stayed a brave while."

"Father Ryan. He's a fine young man entirely," Pat said. "Sure never a one of us ever heard the like of the sermon he preached last Sunday."

Biddy sniffed. "Oh, I suppose he can talk; but I haven't much opinion of him. He's fresh from college."

"He is, I believe," Pat assented.

"Well, sure it isn't like poor Father Brady he is at all. Why, he would just sit down same as you're doing and talk about one thing and another; but with Father Ryan it is different. Sure I'm not denying he may be very good, but he isn't Father Brady."

"That he isn't," Pat agreed.

"When I told him about the amount of land the Gilligans used to own, sure he didn't seem to take it in at all. And when I mentioned the fairies— Well, you should have seen the look he gave me. 'My good woman,' says he, 'there isn't such a thing as a fairy.'"

Pat was pouring out the tea.

- "Well?" he said, laconically.
- "Well, I was able to answer him. I told him how my father wandered one night into the old rath, and how he wasn't able to make his way out of it till day dawn; and it was himself had a stiff knee from that till the day of his death."
 - "Well?" Pat said again as Biddy paused.
- "And I told him how every Saturday night in the year, let it blow fair or foul, there's a white shilling left under the door there."
 - "And what did he say?" Pat had got settled to his meal.
- "He laughed, and said it was a human fairy, and that I should have more sense than to believe in such nonsense. Father Brady never made a remark like that. He'd just nod his head and smile. And then this new curate said that I'd be more comfortable in the workhouse."

Pat paused in his meal and looked round the one room that comprised Biddy's cabin. Its furniture consisted of a couple of stools, a table, a dresser, on which a few plates and mugs were widely scattered, and Biddy's big wooden bedstead. The whitewashed walls were blackened with rain and soot, and, here and there, a hole was to be seen in the thatch. Pat lacked courage to say that he was of Father Ryan's way of thinking.

"Well, the roof's bad, you see," he said.

"I know that; and Pat Rafferty promised that he'd patch it up a bit; but then you never could heed a word the Raffertys said. Anyway, 'tis my own, and here I'll stay till I die."

"Oh, you're a long road from dying yet," Pat said, moving his stool to the fire. "Did you hear that Ned O'Connor has got his ticket for America?"

"Not a word! How should I hear anything! And has he got his ticket?"

"Ay, and isn't it well? There is more rent and debt against the place than it is worth. Sure the old man, his father, was the terrible ill-doing man entirely."

"And the mother always at death's door," Biddy said. "And who sent him the ticket?"

"His cousin, Peter O'Connor, that went to America seven years ago. Sure Mary Blake won't like Ned going away."

"Mary Blake, a girl without a penny! Ned wouldn't be seen

speaking to her!"

"Troth he would! It isn't many pennies he has himself, and

Mary's the brave little girl."

"I have no opinion of the Blakes," the old woman said. "Only for Denis Blake going to law with my father—God rest him—over a bit of bog that always belonged to the Gilligans, it isn't here I'd be now, Pat Nealon. And 'tis you yourself might know that."

"Oh, to be sure. The law put both the men to the bad, that's what it did. Still, Mary Blake had no hand in it." Pat laughed.

"You're like all men," Biddy rejoined, contemptuously, "easily taken with a handsome face, and I suppose Mary Blake has that, though I have no liking for her."

"She works hard enough at the lace-making to support her

bedridden mother. She's your nearest neighbor, too."

"Well, I don't see her nor want to see her, that's all. I never had nor never will have any neighborhood with one of the name."

"Oh, well," Pat said, pacifically, "that's right enough, or anyway, it is your own affair. And now I must be going. There's a grain of the tea and sugar there; maybe you'll use it, Biddy." Pat rose hastily. "Good evening and good luck to you."

Such was Pat's usual mode of departure. Biddy brewed the remainder of his tea and pondered, as she drank it, on what Father Ryan had said to her.

"A human fairy! I'd like to find out. Well, please God, I'll sit up next Saturday night and see for myself!" she muttered.

Biddy did as she said. On the following Saturday night she left the door pushed to, but unlatched, and took a position on a stool beside it. She had kept her place for a very lengthened period according to her reckoning, and was about to retire to bed satisfied that Father Ryan was totally wrong, when she caught the sound of a cautious step, and the next instant the gleam of something white beneath the door caught her eye. With a speed with

which few would have credited her, Biddy flung open the door and made a grasp at the shawled figure that stood for a brief second thunderstruck. After that momentary pause the figure dashed away, leaving the shawl in Biddy's hands.

"And so the new curate was right," the old woman soliloquized sadly as she sat huddled up over a smoldering sod. For years—ever since the rheumatism had taken such a grip of her. —she had risen every Sunday morning to lift the silver coin from the threshold, in the belief that, however low the last of the Gilligans had fallen in the social scale, the fairy folk still remembered them. And now she knew that the shilling had been left weekly by a woman, and worse still, by a woman she did not love.

"Sure Mary Blake's mother had just such a Paisley shawl for her wedding! And Mary goes with the lace to the convent every Saturday, Pat says; and she could come home this way. Oh, dear, 'tis chilled I am to the heart!"

Whether old Biddy had caught cold by sitting at the door on the frosty March night, or whether the shattering of her cherished beliefs had, as she expressed it, chilled her to the bone, a neighbor who called to see the old woman, on her way back from second Mass at one of the country chapels, found her in such a bad state that she deemed it well to summon Father Ryan and the dispensary doctor. The two met in the evening in the cabin.

"She'll go out like the snuff of a candle," the doctor said. "Weak heart, bad circulation, and bronchitis." And the priest set about preparing the lonely old woman for her last long journey.

"And now, your Reverence," Biddy said, when the last rites were administered, "sure I have to ask your pardon. You were right about the fairies. The shilling was left by a neighbor; and there are a few things I'd like to dispose of."

"Very well," Father Ryan said, kindly.

"The fowl and the goat ought to bury me," Biddy calculated. "Hens are a good price now. Anyway I want you to promise me that I'll not be buried by the union. I couldn't rest in a work-house coffin."

The priest promised. It may be said that his own lean purse furnished the money to bury his penitent.

"And you'll mind me in the Mass?"

The priest again gave the required pledge.

- "I leave none of my own behind me," Biddy went on, "and I'd like Jane Conway, the woman that's outside, to have the few bits of things inside, except the bed and the fiddle. I always intended to leave the bed—a fine feather bed it is—to Pat Nealon. He can get it."
 - "And the fiddle?" the priest asked.
- "It is in the case under the bed. Maybe your Reverence would pull it out. The fiddle was my father's, and he set terrible store by it. Sure he could all but make it speak."

"To whom do you wish to give it?"

"Many a time the people wanted it for the dances and weddings," Biddy said by way of reply, "but I took good care of it."

"And you leave it to whom?" Father Ryan asked again.

- "To the fairy that left the shilling on the Saturday nights." Biddy gave a wheezing laugh. "That's her shawl inside the case," and Biddy explained how she became possessed of the article.
- "It looks like a shawl I have seen on Mary Blake," Father Ryan said.
- "I wouldn't doubt it. Anyway, your Reverence can find out. And I'd be at rest if you'd take the fiddle with you. It might not be safe during the wake."

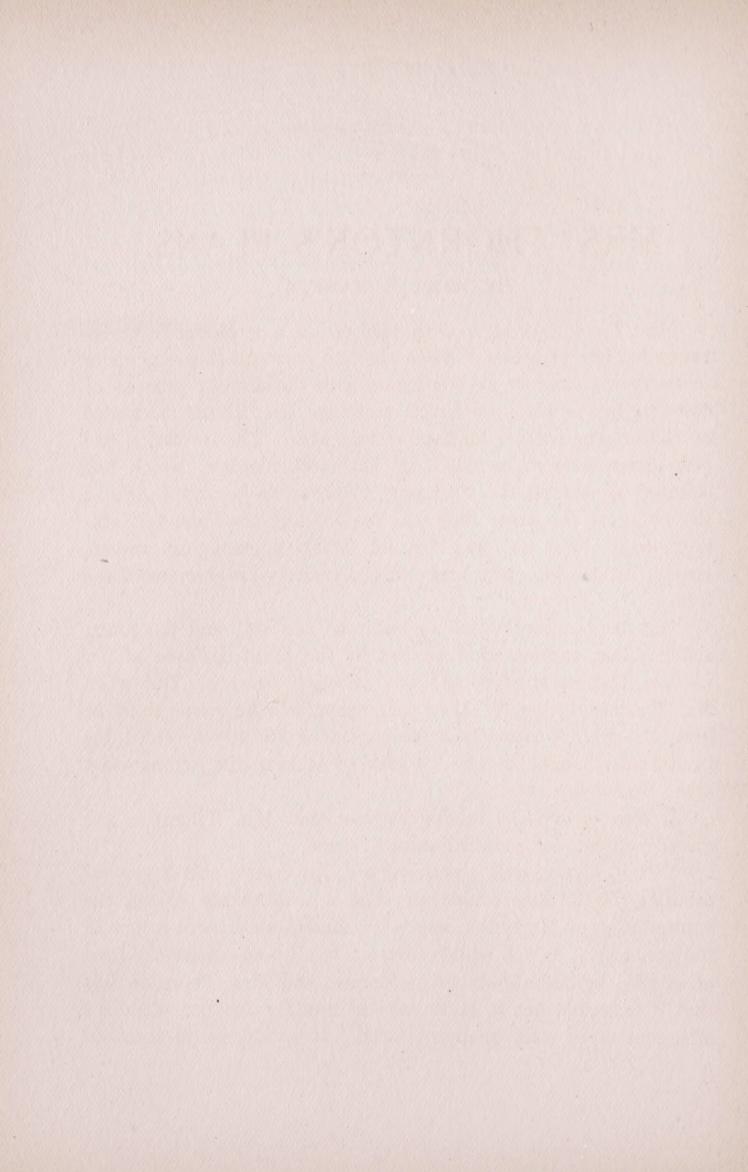
So Father Ryan walked home through the purple dusk of the March evening with the fiddle and the Paisley shawl in the old black case under his arm. It so chanced that a former college friend who had been abroad studying music was his guest, and to him the priest told of Biddy's bequests.

"Let us see the fiddle," Philip Derey said, and he gave a cry when he beheld it. "Why, it is a Stradivarius; a genuine Stradivarius," he cried after a brief examination. "It is worth ——" he mentioned a sum that sounded preposterous in the priest's ears.

"But it is," Philip insisted. "And Mary Blake, who ever she is, is a lucky girl."

"She's a good girl at any rate," Father Ryan said.

And thus it was that Mary Blake became in course of time an heiress in a small way. Matt Gilligan's fiddle was sold by Philip Derey for a sum that enabled Ned O'Connor to clear up the debts on his farm and start farming afresh when he married Mary Blake or, as Father Ryan termed her, "Biddy Gilligan's Fairy."



MRS. THORNTON'S PLANS.

BY MARY E. MANNIX.

MRS. THORNTON sat in deep meditation, a perplexed frown between her pretty brows. When she had invited her young sister to spend the summer at Merlinton, with the distinct purpose of assisting her to make a desirable marriage, she had not calculated on the presence of her husband's sister also. The invitation had been given before the death of her mother-in-law, which had changed all her plans. And now, to have two beautiful girls in the house at the same time was really more than she felt able to manage. For she was, beyond doubt, a managing woman, though her unsuspecting husband was entirely unconscious of the fact.

But her late mother-in-law had read her well, and the young sister-in-law, influenced somewhat by the silent disfavor of her mother, had never cherished any affection for her. But when Mr. Thornton wrote to Alice that henceforth his home must be hers, the girl, so recently bereaved, had gratefully accepted the invitation, though she had no idea of making the arrangement other than temporary.

It may as well be related at once that Mrs. Thornton had already chosen her sister's future husband.

Young, clever, well circumstanced, handsome, and a general favorite, Dr. Milnes could have had a wide choice among the young ladies of Merlinton, where the masculine sex was rather in the minority. As yet, while courteous to all, and apparently fond of society, he had shown no preference, and Mrs. Thornton felt that it behooved her to make sure of him for Alethea while his affections were still unappropriated. It would be pleasant to

have her only sister near her. Family affection was Mrs. Thornton's most redeeming feature. Alethea was a pretty, stylish, soulless little girl, but in Mrs. Thornton's opinion there never was man so serious or learned as not to be captivated by a beautiful face. At the same time she had sufficient penetration to know that Dr. Milnes was in no sense frivolous, and that Alice's chances would be very good should she meet the doctor before Alethea arrived. Alice possessed both beauty and brains. Moreover, in order better to care for her invalid mother, she had taken a partial course at a nurses' training school, and if Dr. Milnes had any fad, Mrs. Thornton decided it was this. It would be a bond of sympathy between them from the first. Great mischief might be wrought before Alethea should arrive, provided Alice had a good start, which now seemed likely.

Alice was to reach Merlinton on the morrow. Alethea, who was paying a round of visits at various county houses was not due at Merlinton for a month. Therefore it was that Mrs. Thornton sat with perplexed brows in the little summer-house at the end of the garden. But suddenly her face cleared, a pleasant smile played about her lips, and rising briskly she returned to the house, where she rejoiced the heart of her husband by the cordial way in which she spoke of the expected arrival.

Three days later she was sitting with her sister-in-law on the piazza.

"I am sorry," she began, "that you are in deep mourning, Alice, dear. It will make it so dull for you not to be able to attend the lawn fêtes that are just going to overwhelm us this summer. And there are to be a couple of tennis-tournaments later on. You play tennis, don't you?"

"I did, formerly," replied Alice, looking down on her interlocutor from the balustrade, where she sat, fanning herself with her shade hat. "I used to like it very much. But I may as well tell you at once, Fanny, that as soon as I can obtain a desirable position in one of the large hospitals I mean to take it. I like the work, and I could not be happy depending upon Edward." Mrs. Thornton could scarcely help manifesting the pleasure she felt at this news. Oh that the position might appear very soon! was her inward ejaculation, as she rapidly revolved the situation in her own mind. With great promptitude she came to a decision. She would not invite Dr. Milnes to the house at all during the month. At the end of that period Alethea would have arrived, and it was fervently to be hoped that Alice, if the fates were kind, might have taken her departure. She felt sure that her husband could use his influence in favor of his sister. At the same time she knew that he would oppose her purpose.

To Alice she said, very sweetly:

"Don't think of it, dear. I'd rather you wouldn't. But if you must, why, we shall only have to give way to you."

And Alice, who was a girl of discrimination, read in her shifting eyes that she meant exactly the opposite of what she said.

Thus it came about that Alice had been a month at Merlinton before Dr. Milnes was invited to a "quiet game of tennis, because of Mr. Thornton's mother's death and her sister-in-law's mourning, you know."

"Ah!" he had said. "Is your sister-in-law residing with you, Mrs. Thornton?"

"Yes, but she insists in keeping a strict seclusion," was the reply.

"A widow?"

"No," hesitated Mrs. Thornton, in a tone that caused the young man to wonder if perhaps she was a *divorcée*. Being very discreet he made no further remark.

Mrs. Thornton expected much from that lawn-tennis party. It was to be followed by a light supper on the lawn, with colored lights, music, etc. She confidently hoped that it would initiate a period of devotion on the part of Dr. Milnes which would eventually result in the settlement of her sister in the neighborhood. She realized, however, that Alice could not be kept always in the farther background; reserved as she might wish to be, it was inevitable that she and the doctor must meet eventually. And

attractive as Alethea was in her dainty, airy beauty, Mrs. Thornton could not resist the conviction that Alice, with her tall, slender figure and calm, *spirituelle* face might be a formidable rival.

Everything seemed to fall in with her plans at the end. On the day before the proposed *fête* Alice received an offer from the Good Samaritan Hospital, which she accepted at once. She was to leave "Belle Vista" three days later, and the joy of her sisterin-law was supreme, particularly as she declined to take any part in the coming festivities. "I shall be too busy packing," she said. "And I have letters to write. I want to straighten out all the odds and ends before I go."

The party was a success. Dr. Milnes and Alethea had enjoyed a long tête-à-tête in the garden, and Mrs. Thornton was happy, for the doctor had hitherto been conspicuous by the impersonality of his attentions.

But soon all was changed. In the silence of midnight Alice was suddenly awakened from a sound sleep by her sister-in-law.

"Alice, Alice!" she cried. "Come quickly. Edward is dying!"

The girl sprang from her bed, and was soon at her brother's side.

"I think it is angina pectoris," she said. "He had an attack some years ago. Where can we find a doctor?"

As she spoke a loud clap of thunder shook the house to its foundation, and the rain began to pour in torrents.

"Dr. Milnes lives a mile away," answered Mrs. Thornton, wringing her hands. "There is no man in the house to send. What shall we do?"

But at the words "Dr. Milnes," Alice had hurried from the room. In a very short time she returned dressed for the errand she was about to undertake.

"The address, Fanny?" she said. A moment later she was on her way. Quickly she sped through the driving rain, the wind almost taking her off her feet. When she reached the square where the doctor resided the rain began to abate. At the corner she met a policeman, who gazed at her curiously, and passed on. At length she stood in front of the house. A light was burning in the front room on the ground floor, and she rang the bell, shuddering to hear the sounds reecho through the silent night. It had not ceased reverberating when Dr. Milnes appeared at the door.

"What is it?" he inquired, peering into the darkness.

"I beg that you will come at once to Mr. Edward Thornton's," replied Alice. There was a tremor in her voice.

Dr. Milnes threw the door wide open. "Come in," he said peremptorily, and she obeyed him.

For a moment they stood looking at each other.

"Miss Windom!" he said. "How are you here?"

"Never mind," she replied. "My brother is very ill. Lose no time."

"Your brother!" he exclaimed, touching an electric bell which communicated with the stable in the rear of the house—he was already putting on his coat.

"Bring some remedies," she continued, "I fear it is an attack of angina pectoris."

He went into the office, returning presently with a small satchel. At the sound of wheels pausing in front of the house he opened the door. In a moment he had taken the reins from the groom, and she was sitting beside him in the carriage.

Not a word was spoken till they reached the Thornton house, now all aglow with lights. They hurried up-stairs. Mr. Thornton was still suffering, but much less severely than at first. After applying some remedies and leaving directions for future treatment in case of another attack before morning the doctor turned to Alice, saying:

"I would like to speak with you a moment before I leave."

"He thinks she is the nurse. He has seen her at the training school," thought Mrs. Thornton, who sat holding her husband's hand.

Alice had thrown off her cloak and hat. Her face, usually so pale, was flushed, her eyes shone like stars.

"How beautiful she looks," thought Mrs. Thornton. "Excitement is very becoming to her."

Alice followed the doctor into the hall. He led the way down the stairs, through the open door to the piazza. There was a sweet fragrance in the air; the moon struggling through clouds was sending long lines of light upon the drooping leaves, glittering with rain-drops.

"Miss Windom," said Doctor Milnes, "did you say that Mr.

Thornton was your brother?"

"My half brother," she replied. "We had the same mother."

"Ah, I see! And how long have you been here?"

"About a month."

"Why has no one seen or heard of you?"

"I am not going out. My mother is recently dead."

"You are residing with your brother?"

"Only temporarily. I go to take a position at the Good Samaritan Hospital in a day or two."

The doctor bit his lip. "Excuse me," he said, "but why did you not leave me your address?"

"I was not requested to do so."

"Did not Mrs. Bird tell you when you left the hospital?"

"She did not."

"I asked her to do so. When I returned from Cuba I found you both gone. I wanted to ask you a question. May I ask it now?"

She hesitated, avoiding his eyes.

"Can you not guess it? Did you not know my feelings before I went away?"

She remained silent.

"What must you have thought!" he continued.

"That I was mistaken," she replied, with a swift, bright smile.

He seized her hand. "May I ask it now?"

"I can not say no," she said, again glancing away.

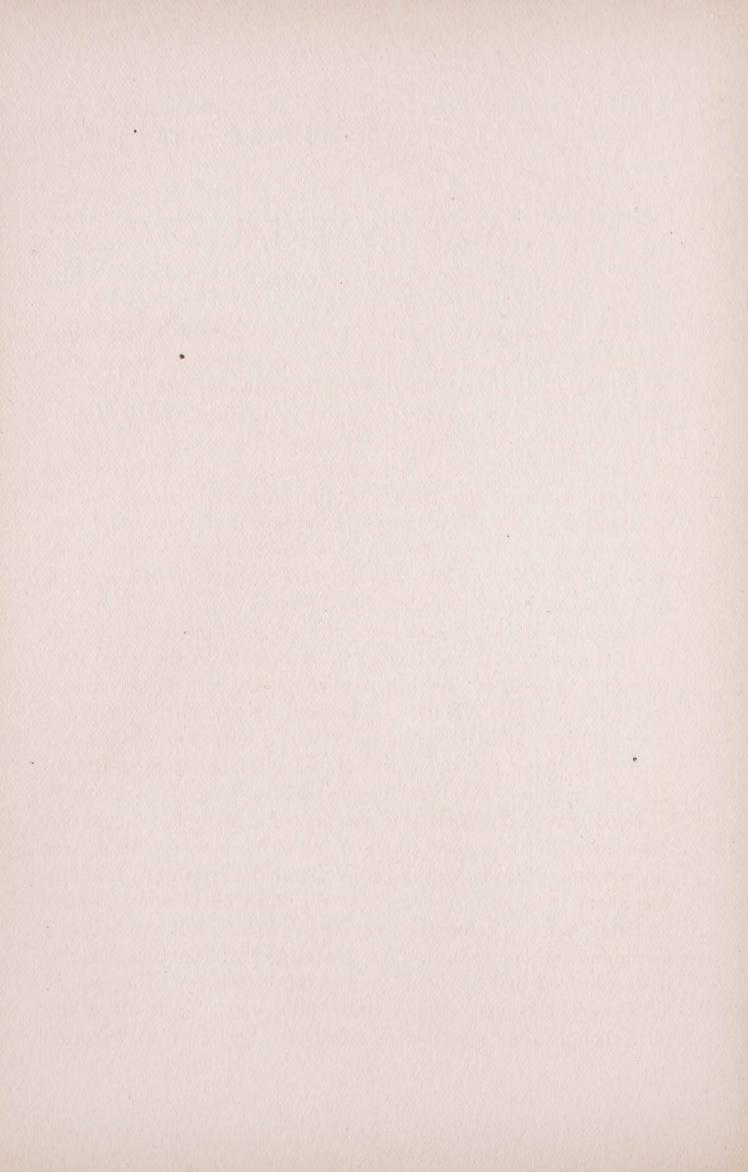
"I love you. Will you marry me?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "I love you-I will marry you,"

she said in tones scarcely audible. But he heard them, and for five or ten minutes longer the moon looked down on a pair of happy lovers.

* * * * *

Mrs. Thornton received quite a shock the next morning, when, after having paid his patient a satisfactory visit, the doctor announced the engagement. But, being a woman of diplomatic instincts, albeit they were sometimes misdirected, she accepted the inevitable with a very good grace. Alethea found, without difficulty, a husband more to her taste than the grave young physician would have proven, and Mrs. Thornton is quite fond of bringing forward, both literally and figuratively, "my sister, the wife of Dr. David Dexter Milnes."



MARY'S TRIAL.

BY MARY E. MANNIX.

The household of Jacob Bleek consisted of himself and daughter, a niece, the child of his dead brother, and a stepson of his deceased wife, who, from his entrance into the family, had been treated as a son. Both girls were named Mary, and in order to distinguish them the younger, the niece, was known as Marie. After Jacob's wife died, the girls, aged sixteen and eighteen, assumed sole charge of the household, greatly to the satisfaction of the old man and the approval of their neighbors. Jacob Bleek was the proprietor of a small but flourishing farm, in —, England, and added to his yearly income by keeping bees, in which line he was remarkably successful.

Rudolph Marks, the stepson, was of great assistance to his adopted father, and was like an elder brother to the girls, who, though very fond of each other, were unlike, both in appearance and in temperament. Mary was dark and serious, Marie blonde and lively, always playing pranks on her companions, and never without a merry jest upon her lips, or a bright retort at the tip of her tongue. Her mischievous sallies seemed particularly directed against Rudolph, who was also of a grave and thoughtful disposition, but who never resented any of her innocent little jokes against him. Life flowed on peacefully at the farm until Rudolph was about twenty-five, when the death of an uncle who had emigrated to America before the young man was born left him heir to a considerable property in the New World, and after mature thought, it was decided that he should go and take possession of it, and, if he was satisfied, make that country his home. While all at the farm thought the decision wise, every heart was filled with sorrow

at the parting. When it was over, an unwonted calm settled upon the place for many days. The old man missed his faithful helper, and the girls their life-long companion.

But letters soon began to come from America, giving glowing accounts of its wonderful extent and resources, as well as of the comfortable circumstances in which Rudolph found himself. The natural buoyancy of Marie's disposition speedily reasserted itself; she was the center of every joyous assemblage, and might have had her choice of all the village suitors. Mary, too, was not without admirers, but neither of the girls seemed at all inclined to marry. There was not a thought which the outspoken Marie did not seem to share with her more than sister—but Mary, on the other hand, sometimes reproached herself that there was one little secret which she had never breathed to her confiding cousin. And yet she could not have done so—it was too impalpable for words—too sacred for expression. On the night before Rudolph's departure she was on her way from the dairy, when he met her near the arbor, and said:

"Come, Mary, sit for a moment with me on the bench by the old apricot tree. I want to have a word with you."

She could not tell why her heart had beat so strangely as he took her hand, and followed him to the seat where the happy trio had passed so many pleasant hours together. "Mary," he began, when they were seated. "If in a year I should write you a letter, asking a certain question, I wonder what would your answer be."

Then the merry voice of Marie had suddenly hailed them from the end of the path, and in another moment she had joined them.

Sweet, but brief had been that instant's revelation, bringing to Mary the knowledge that Rudolph was dearer to her than a brother, and from it was born a hope that grew and blossomed in her heart as the days and months went by.

Rudolph had been gone a year. One evening Mary was sitting on the bench in the garden, now grown so dear to her from the associations it called forth, when Marie, who had been to the Post Office, came slowly toward her, holding an open letter in her hand. Her cheeks were flushed, her whole manner betrayed unusual excitement.

"Mary," she said abruptly, seating herself beside her cousin. "This letter is from Rudolph. He has asked me to marry him. Read it."

Without betraying by a tremor the deep emotion which filled her soul at this unexpected news, Mary took the letter from her cousin's hand and read as follows:

"MY DEAREST ONE:

"The title may seem strange to you, but that is how I have called you in my heart for many a day. I resolved to wait a year before asking you to be my wife. The year is over—and now I await your answer in hope and fear. Will you come to me, dearest, and be to me in truth as you have long been in my thoughts and dreams, the darling of my heart? The Arnsons leave for America in October—they are coming direct to this place. May I expect you, dear girl? Do not write that you can not marry me, but come quickly to your loving

"RUDOLPH."

Mary read slowly to the end. Then she looked fondly at her cousin and said:

"How is it with you, Marie? Will you go? Do you love him?"

"Oh, Mary, I believe I do," replied the other. "At least in comparison with him all the rest seem nothing. Is that love?"

"Perhaps it is—why should it not be, dear? But you have concealed your feelings very well until now—"

"I have never been sure. I should not have been unhappy if he had not spoken, but I do not believe I ever would have married another."

"I think that is love—yes—that must be love," replied Mary in an oddly constrained tone, which her cousin noticed.

"How strangely you speak, Mary," she said. "Your voice sounds so queer. Oh, my dear, my dear, I will not leave you, if it makes you lonely—"

"That would be a selfish affection indeed, which would sacrifice the happiness of another to its own demands," said Mary, clasping her cousin's hand closely in her own. "I feel that you will be happy with Rudolph, and as for me," she hesitated, stifled a sob, and continued:

"I have my father—my dear father—"

"But, Mary, after he is gone, you will come to us? Somehow I feel that you will never marry."

"I never will," replied her cousin with an intensity that surprised Marie. "God grant that the day may be far distant when I shall have to part with my father."

"He, too, has had a letter," said Marie. "Let us go to him."

They found him sitting beside the kitchen table in deep reflection. An open letter lay upon his knee.

"How is this?" he exclaimed as the girls entered. Turning to Mary he continued: "Rudolph wants to take you away from me?"

"Not me, father," responded his daughter, calmly. "It is Marie whom he wants."

"What?" rejoined the old man. "You puzzle me. See this..."

The girl took the letter from his hand. The beginning related to business affairs. Toward the close, it said:

"Now, father, some one else will have had a letter to-day besides yourself. I want one of your treasures for my own garden—for my wife. Can you grant her to me? I know that your kind heart and Mary's will not say me nay."

"You see—it is Mary he mentions—" repeated the old man.

"Father, you misunderstand," said Mary, in a voice of the greatest composure. "Marie has had a letter. Rudolph wants her to go out to him, to America. What he says of me means that you and I together will help each other to give her up. Don't you see, father?"

"Well, well, so be it then," replied the old man. "Right glad am I to give her to Rudolph, though it will be more lonely than ever now for you, my girl, with only the poor old man to keep you company. Yet sorry am I to part with her—the dear child—though

so it must be always as long as there is marrying and giving in marriage. God bless thee, Marie—thou wilt go to a kind and loving husband—"

That night they had a bottle of old wine for supper, and one would have hesitated to say which was the happiest of the three. But long after the others slept Mary knelt by the window, praying. Henceforward life must be changed for her, but she was a brave girl, and no one was ever the wiser of her battle with sad and embittered thoughts, from which she came forth the victor. Yet it was all in vain that she tried to acquit Rudolph of inconstancy. His words to her on that last eventful evening could have meant but one thing—it was his fickleness that caused her heart its deepest wound. Still, she resolutely put the memory from her, and went about her duties as cheerfully as before.

* * * * *

One warm spring evening ten years later the mistress of the white farmhouse sat beside the open window of her little parlor, musing and singing softly a quaint old ballad she had often heard her father sing. His lips had been silent long, though the bees he had loved still hummed and buzzed and gathered honey in the sweet pastures of long ago. Marie also was gone—Rudolph had been a widower about eighteen months; Mary's thoughts often dwelt upon her cousin and the two children she had left, and as time passed she longed more and more to see them, who had been the idols of their mother's heart. But that was never likely to happen, she thought-America was so very far away, and Rudolph's letters since the death of his wife had been few and far between. A footstep roused her—a man stood in the doorway with outstretched hands. Changed, and yet unchanged—a little older, a little more portly, but the same Rudolph she had known, serious-manly, his eyes full of joy at seeing her. She stepped forward with a low cry.

"Mary," he said, and drew her close to him. "Mary," he went on, "do not speak till I have finished. What must you have thought of me during all these years? Do not reproach me, till

I have told you all. It was a mistake—that letter—it was you whom I loved—always, always—"

"And yet you pretended-oh, Rudolph, did you deceive us

both?" she cried, trying to withdraw from him.

"I pretended nothing," he continued hurriedly. "I pretended nothing. By some dreadful oversight I addressed to Marie the letter which was intended for you—realizing it only after it had gone. When she came, what could I do? All that was left me then was to make it impossible she should ever know, and she never did. I was a faithful husband to her in thought and deed; I mourned her when she died. But now she is gone, and I have come back to you—my heart's love—as she would bid me do if from her place in heaven she could speak to me. Mary, I want you for my wife—"

Then all the pent-up emotion of her life broke forth, and for a long time he could not soothe her. But the storm passed, and once again she was the same gently-smiling Mary as of old, patient and sweet, sitting with her hand in his, while he told her the story of his life since he had left her. Suddenly he saw that it was growing dark. He sprang to his feet.

"Think of me!" he cried. "Mary, you have made me forget my own children. They are waiting for me at the inn—my little

boy and girl."

"Your children!" she exclaimed. "Why did you not bring them with you, Rudolph? Marie's children—"

"Because I wanted to know what you had to say to me first," he said. "I could not be at peace a moment until I knew. But come, now, put on your bonnet and we will go down and get them. They love you dearly already as their cousin—I am impatient to introduce you to them as their new mother."

THE LAST TRYST.

BY MARY E. MANNIX.

AN old woman was walking up and down the long acacia avenue in the garden of the Home for the Aged—under the supervision of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

She had her beads in her hand, and presently, kissing the silver crucifix depending from the rosary, she made the sign of the cross. A Sister was sitting darning stockings in a little summer-house near by.

"Good morning, Catharine," she said, as the old woman reached the door.

"Good morning, Sister," was the reply. "I wish my eyes weren't so bad, till I'd give you a hand at the mending. 'Twas I was fine at the needle once, but that's a long time ago. I'm good for nothing now but peeling the vegetables and sayin' my prayers."

"And giving every one a cheery word," said Sister Beatrice, with a smile. "That counts for a great deal, Catharine. Sit there on the step and rest yourself."

The old woman sat down. She wore a coarse black gown, but her long gingham apron and the white silk handkerchief about her neck were scrupulously clean. Softly waving silver locks framed a sweet, restful face, that must once have been very beautiful.

"That is a curious crucifix you have there, Catharine," remarked the nun. "Perhaps it belonged to your mother?"

"No, Sister, but to his."

"His? I thought you were never married?"

"Nor was I, Sister. Catharine Blake I was born, and Catharine Blake I'll die. But there was a boy I liked once, and

he gave it to me when he left home. 'Twas on account of him I came to America."

"And why didn't you marry him, Catharine?"

"Sure, I never found him. My people wouldn't have me speak to him, if they could help it. He was shiftless, they said—and maybe he was. But he had a kind heart, and he was fond of me. He was a great singer, and he played the fiddle fine, and a better-lookin' boy there was not in the whole barony."

"And you came to America looking for him? That was not very wise, Catharine."

"He sent me the address of the place where he lived. I waited seven months till I earned money enough. I was at service with a farmer. When I had the money in hand I came."

"Without telling your people?"

"Without telling my people. My mother was dead long since, my brothers and sisters all married. And when I came to New York he was gone— And I never found him."

"That was some time ago, Catharine?" said the Sister, glancing at the withered hands closed about the silver crucifix in the old woman's lap.

"Nearly fifty years—no less. But there's never a day since he gave me the cross that I did not say my beads for him. I worked an' I worked, I went here an' I went there, but I never found him. There was a great tale of gold in California in early days, and I came out, thinking maybe I'd meet him. But I never did, Sister dear, I never did. Blessed be the holy will of God!"

* * * *

It was a strange little procession—inaugurating the Forty Hours. Four of the least decrepit among the old men carried the canopy, while such of their companions as were able followed. Behind them came the old women, then the Sisters, chanting the *Pange Lingua*.

Suddenly from among the group of men a voice chimed in—feeble at first, but swelling in volume as it gained courage. A flutter ran through the whole length of the procession.

Some of the men looked at one another with a surprised and

disapproving shake of the head; many of the women pressed their lips together, hardly able to restrain a smile. Catharine Blake walked at the end with her friend and comrade, Bridget Miles.

"God bless me!" whispered Bridget. "What old man is that? 'Twas a fine voice once, though, Catharine."

Catharine put her fingers to her lips, and made no sound. But there were tears in the faded blue eyes, and the hands that wrapped themselves about the silver crucifix trembled as with palsy.

It was late in the afternoon before the old woman could waylay Sister Beatrice, for whom she had been watching. At last she saw her coming out of the chapel, where she herself had spent the greater part of the day.

"Sister dear," she asked, "can you tell me the name of that man who joined in the singin' this mornin'? Is he here a long time?"

"His name is Arthur Donahue," said Sister Beatrice. "He is a newcomer—very feeble, but begged to be allowed to walk in the procession to-day. He meant no harm, poor man, and his voice is remarkably good for a person of his age."

"That is so, Sister," Catharine replied, in a low tone. "But years ago it couldn't be beat in all Ireland. That's the boy I told ye of, Sister dear."

"You are sure, Catharine?"

"Am I sure of my own name? Yes, Sister; that's the boy, I seen him. His hair is white now, and his face old, but it would take more changes than them for me not to know Arthur when I cast my eyes on him. Would you ask the good Mother could I see him, Sister? If he knew, he'd be just as glad as me, I'm sure."

"I will, I will, Catharine," answered Sister Beatrice cheerily. "To-morrow morning we'll arrange it—and I'm certain, as you say, he will be as glad as yourself. What a strange, strange happening that you should find each other here, after all these years!"

The old women were leaving the refectory next morning when Sister Beatrice again sought Catharine Blake. Taking her by the hand, she led her into the garden.

"Catharine," she said, "I have something to tell you."

"Yes, Sister," replied the old woman, with trembling lips.

"You were right. He is the man you knew. Last night he was suddenly stricken and is now dying. It is paralysis. At first his mind wandered, and he called your name. Later he came to his senses and has already received the sacraments. I will take you to him."

Catharine did not speak. Side by side the two women entered the infirmary, where the old man lay dying. In a moment Catharine was leaning over him.

- "Do you know me, Arthur?" she asked, wiping the tears from her cheeks with one old shriveled hand, while the other rested on his outside the coverlet.
- "Sure I do, Cathie," he said, quite calmly. "But where are your brown locks?"
- "Gone with yours, Arthur," she answered, smiling through her tears.
 - "And where were you all the time?"
 - "Looking for you mostly, till I came to this good place."
- "And I thought you went back on me! I thought it—God forgive me, Cathie. I—I was very bitter once—but I never married."
- "You were not in New York at the place you told me, and no one knew where you'd gone, Arthur."
 - "I waited nigh seven months without tale or tidings."
- "'Twas my fault, Arthur. I should have come when you told me."
- "No; but mine. I was too hot-headed, and a rover always—always from the day I was born."
 - "I knew your voice in the chapel yesterday."
- "An' did you? Well, well. 'Twas a crazy thing to do, Cathie, but I couldn't help it. I had to sing out as I used to at home."

"'Twas God did it, Arthur. Praise and thanks be to His holy name. After all our wanderin's we're together at last."

"Will you let her stay near me, Sister?" asked the old man,

with a wan smile, as he softly patted Catharine's hand.

"As long as she likes," said the Sister. "All day if she wishes."

"Then I'll never leave him, Sister dear," said Catharine, drawing a chair to the bedside.

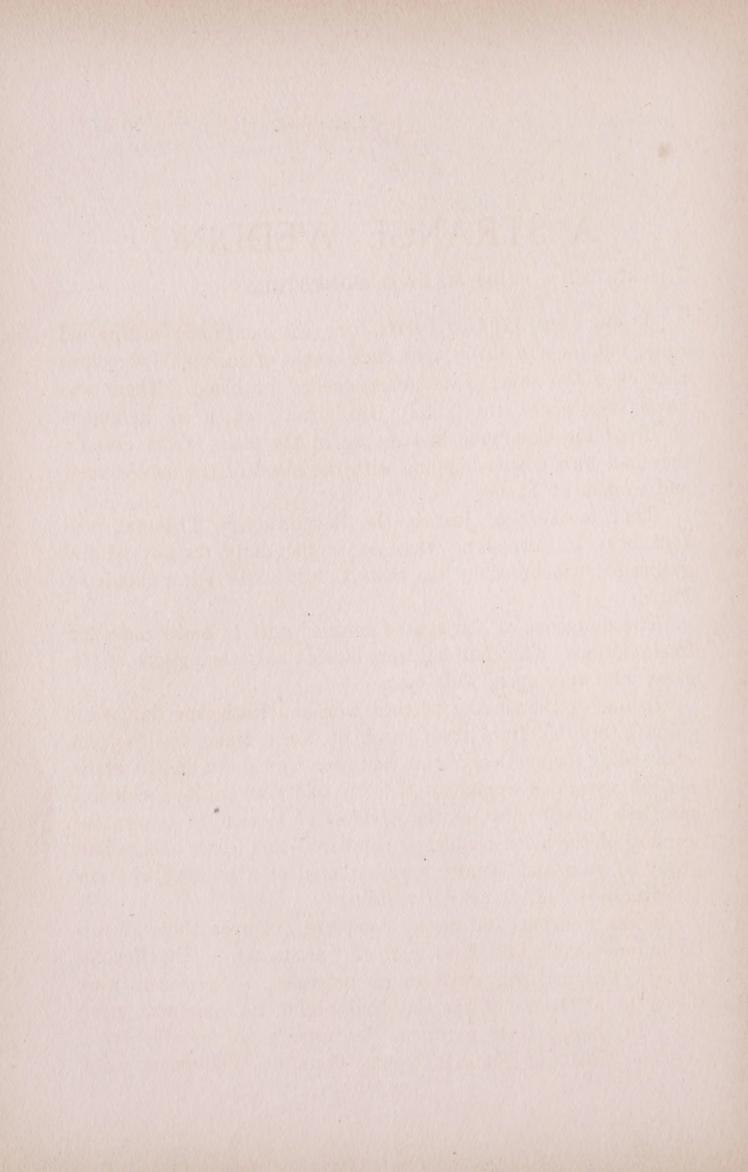
Sister Beatrice went away.

"Do you mind this, Arthur?" asked Catharine, after a moment.

He lifted his eyes, and feebly extended his hand, chill with the touch of death. The fingers closed about the crucifix—he pressed it to his lips.

"My mother's cross! Oh, Cathie," he murmured, "yours was the brave, true heart, acushla, the loving heart—"

After that he spoke no more. People came and went, but Catharine neither saw nor heard them. Till the last fluttering breath faded away into silence she sat, her hand on his, the crucifix between them, token of a lifelong human love, emblem of the love everlasting that was soon to encompass him; her quest forever done, her patience rewarded, faithful to the end.



A STRANGE WEDDING.

BY MARY G. BONESTEEL.

It was June, 1794, in Paris: June, the month of sunshine and roses, but the sun shone upon such scenes of incredible atrocities that even the sweet June roses smelled of blood. There was blood everywhere, the "Holy Guillotine," which the infamous chiefs of the Commune had set up in the place of the crucifix they had torn down, dripping with the blood of the noblest men and women of France.

That mockery of justice, the Revolutionary Tribunal, was kept busy in furnishing victims for the daily tragedy of the guillotine, demanded by the Sans Culottes, the vilest rabble of Paris.

The dungeons of Paris were emptied only to make room for fresh victims. The churches were closed; only the prisons of the great city were open, wide open.

In one of the smaller of these vile and loathsome dungeons, situated not far from the Church of Notre Dame itself—from whose altar the spotless Virgin had been torn down and in whose place a notorious woman of the city had been set up, with unspeakable blasphemies, as the Goddess of Reason, to receive the worship of the blood-maddened populace—that a gay and gallant group of men and women were gathered on that 25th of June to witness—of all things—a wedding!

It was a curious and motley company, but upon them all was the unmistakable and fatal sign of "aristocrat." The Revolutionary Tribunal was swift in its processes; its prisoners were seized at all hours of the day and night; no time was given them to change their garments for some more suitable for a prison. When the beautiful young Countess D'Harcourt asked for a shawl to cover her bare neck, she was told, with brutal laughter, that it was not necessary—that it would make La Guillotine's work the easier. The countess formed one of the strange group gathered that June morning to witness the marriage of the Citizeness D'Artanyon, only child of the Citizeness D'Artanyon, sometimes called the Marquise D'Artanyon, to the Citizen La Fourré, commonly known as the Count La Fourré—himself a prisoner in the dungeon of La Tour, as well as Madame D'Artanyon, mother of the bride.

And how came a wedding amid the ghastly scenes of the Reign of Terror?

The Citizen Belot, in charge of the prison of La Tour, had from his boyhood lived on one of the estates of Madame D'Artanyon, and at the time of the breaking out of the Revolution had been factor of the estate whose grounds adjoined those of the young Count La Fourré. On this estate stood the beautiful château of D'Artanyon, which for two centuries had been the summer home of the family, as the castle on the adjoining estate had been that of the La Fourrés.

René La Fourré was the sole descendant of his ancient and honorable name, while Marie D'Artanyon was the only daughter of her race; from the time they were babies their betrothal had been planned by both families, and their wedding looked forward to as the joining of two of the most ancient families of the aristocracy, and of their vast estates as well.

The two children had grown up together in the peace and security of their country homes, Belot, the factor, their greatest friend. The events of the Revolution moved swiftly, however, and Belot, being an ardent patriot, had given himself heart and soul to the cause of the Revolutionists, and had risen from one position of trust to another, until he was placed in charge of the small bastile of La Tour. Hardened as he had become to the daily scenes of carnage, the man was horror-stricken to find one day among a new batch of "aristocrat" victims his former mistress, Madame La Marquise D'Artanyon, and Monsieur René, mademoiselle's fiancé.

Old memories and affections revived at the sight of them, and the wretched man did what little he could to mitigate their sad lot. Madame had been brought before the Tribunal on the sole charge of being an aristocrat, to which she had proudly pleaded "guilty." Whereupon a bystander had struck her gray head, crying, "Down with the aristocrats!" René, who had accompanied the marquise to this infamous court, threw the ruffian to the ground. He was instantly arrested on the charge of sympathizing with and encouraging the nobles. The same rough, open cart took them both to prison that same day.

All that day the young girl Marie awaited the return of her mother in the small bare room which they occupied together in an obscure part of the city. The better to conceal their identity and provide a scanty living, both ladies plied the trade of making wax flowers, calling themselves plain Artan. A former servant who had been discharged from madame's service for dishonesty discovered their retreat, and at once reported them to the Commune.

René La Fourré had taken a room near by, so that he might watch over and protect his betrothed and her mother; he, too, worked at a trade, making hand-carved cabinets. For almost a year the three devoted friends had led a peaceful life, safe in the midst of a reign of terror which carried daily to the insatiable maws of the guillotine their lifelong friends and relatives.

So secure did they feel that madame had at last consented to the union of the two young people. The day was set, the 25th of June, and a young priest who was in hiding not far from where they lived, an old schoolmate and friend of René's, was to perform the ceremony. And then had come the sudden visit of the officers of the law, madame was seized and hurried roughly to the open cart in which the prisoners were made to ride, so that the rabble might see and gloat over their misfortune; René accompanied madame only as a great favor and by slipping a gold piece into the hand of the officer in charge.

"Courage, Marie, we shall soon return," he called to the

young girl. But the day passed and the night, and the next, and still they did not return. Then the young girl, with the courage of her race, set out alone to find them.

Alone in Paris, alone in that city of crime and horrors unspeakable, whose gutters ran deep with the blood of the good and innocent, Marie decided to become a flower-girl, so that in selling her wares she might come and go unsuspected. Before long she traced her mother and lover to their prison, and great was the joy of the young girl when she found Belot in charge.

Marie's innocent confidence and faith in Belot's good-will to help them softened the man's heart completely, and it was he who had determined that Marie should be married upon the wedding-day chosen. He allowed the flower-girl to sell her wares to the prisoners, and so well was the secret kept among the little company of victims that no one in the prison suspected the young girl to be anything but what she pretended to be, a flower-girl from the Rue Sabot; thus were they enabled to perfect their plans.

Among the prisoners was the young Abbé Maurepas, a nephew of the great statesman, and he was to marry Marie and René in the outside corridor of La Tour, while Belot was to see that they were uninterrupted for a few moments. The hour chosen was an early one, when all the employees and most of the prison guards were at breakfast.

The prison clock was striking five when Marie appeared before the great iron gates of La Tour. Belot himself opened them to the little bride, who stood there, sweet and trembling, in a gown of simple white, with a bunch of white jasmine in her hair. There was a strange look about the young girl which puzzled Belot—a look of holy exaltation. Her lips moved as if in constant prayer, and she carried in her hands, clasped to her breast, a white ivory missal.

"She looks as if she had just made her first communion," thought Belot, with tender recollections of his own youthful days of innocence.

Marie found the group of prisoners assembled to meet her

before the tall iron railing of the outside corridor where the prisoners took their exercise. A covered table stood there, with pen, ink, and paper for the signing of the marriage contract. Without a word Marie went straight to the young Abbé, who was standing somewhat apart; she said something to him in a low tone, then handing the ivory missal to him, knelt in an attitude of reverent devotion.

The tears were streaming down the young priest's face, and his voice was choked with sobs as he turned to tell his fellow prisoner of the Guest whom little Marie had brought to the wedding-feast. René's friend, the priest who was to have married them, had confided to Marie the ivory missal, which was hollow and contained a pyx, in which consecrated Hosts had been placed so that the prisoners of La Tour might receive the Bread of life pefore they died.

With a cry of amazed joy the little group of aristocrats fell upon their knees, to adore their Lord and God; the men with bared heads, the women with tears of emotion streaming unheeded down their cheeks. They did not dare remain kneeling to make their confession, but taking them in turn the Abbé heard them as they paced to and fro up and down the long prison corridor.

Old, hardened men of the world who had not received their Lord since the days of their childhood were prepared now to receive Him for the last time. It was a strange and thrilling scene, the Lord of heaven and earth a prisoner among prisoners.

When the last of the little company had received what for most of them proved to be their Holy Viaticum before nightfall, a deep feeling of awe and peace stole over them. The silence was suddenly broken by the low tones of the priest beginning the marriage ceremony. It was soon over, and Marie and René had been pronounced man and wife; Marie was signing her name to the marriage contract, the young Abbé showing her where to write, while René gazed lovingly on, when suddenly the great iron gate was thrown violently open and the sub-chief of the Commune appeared with his list of victims for La Guillotine.

"Get ready, you!" he cried, roughly. "Your carriage awaits you to convey you to the feast." Then he proceeded to read the names selected for that day's slaughter.

The Citizen Maurepas, Citizeness D'Harcourt, were the two first; Marie, half-fainting with suspense, waited until the dread list was finished. Thank God! her own were spared this time.

That very week Belot arranged for the escape of madame and René, and conveyed them in safety to an American sailing-vessel, which carried the emigrés to the shores of the New World.

Under Napoleon their estates, which had been confiscated, were partially restored to them. Madame returned to her beloved France, where she still had a son living, but René and Marie decided to make the new republic their home, René receiving a huge grant of land near the beautiful waters of Lake Champlain for his estate in France. And here to-day lives their great-grandson.

Hanging in the great entrance-hall is a picture painted by the foremost artist of that day, called "The Marriage Contract," and the fair young daughter of the house, Marie, called after her illustrious ancestress, loves to tell the tale of that strange wedding in the prison of La Tour, to which Our Lord came as Guest, even as He did at Cana two thousand years ago.

MRS. MAJOR'S STRATAGEM.

BY MARY G. BONESTEEL.

BILLY SANFORD, first lieutenant of "B" Troop, Sixteenth Cavalry, was engaged to the sweetest girl in the world, who was faithfully waiting in a small Connecticut village, sure that her beloved was winning honors and distinction in far distant Luzon.

At least they considered themselves engaged, though Polly's father, a stern old gentleman, would not give his consent until Billy had cleared up certain reports and given a promise which paterfamilias exacted.

Billy's reputation at poker was second to none, and in a cavalry regiment this means distinction, so that unavoidable, daring accounts of the young man's prowess had reached the old gentleman's ears.

"But I do not gamble, sir; for I never play for more than I can afford," the young officer protested indignantly.

"Humph! What insurance do you carry?"

And Billy, somewhat crestfallen and nonplussed at the sudden change of attack, replied candidly: "None, sir," and here it rested.

Both men remained sulky and obstinate, though each called it "being firm on a matter of principle," while the sweetest girl in the world shed many midnight tears, and suffered patiently.

Billy would not give his promise to the old gentleman not to play for money, because, as he explained to Polly, "It would be admitting that I am a gambler, also it is an infringement upon my personal liberty."

"You'll never have my permission to marry Polly without that promise, young man," the old gentleman swore wrathfully,

"and she'll never marry you without that permission."

"Very good, sir," retorted Billy, in his curt, military manner, "go on being pig-headed and obstinate and break our hearts. I will not make that absurd promise."

Just then the quarrel was cut short by a telegram from Billy's colonel, saying the ——steenth had received hurry orders for the Philippines.

"But, Billy, you have not half recovered from the fever you

got at Santiago," his little sweetheart protested.

"Nonsense, dear! I am as fit as can be," and the young fellow stretched his long, gaunt form, which showed Cuban malaria in every line. But he was of the sort that would far rather die than let his regiment go into active service without him, so long as he could stand.

He gave Polly a promise before he left "not to play poker more than once a week."

"And I'm just as much engaged to you, Billy, as I possibly can be," Polly weepingly insisted.

She was such a doleful little object that her father felt called upon to explain and justify his position.

"It's not that I really think the boy a gambler, my dear, or that I think more of my own way than of your happiness, but it is a matter of principle with me, that my daughter shall not marry a man who plays cards for money."

* * * * *

Billy's troop was quartered at Santa Anna, a few miles out from Manila, on the banks of the Pasig. The town was a busy one, with two highways of commerce: the river, with its never ceasing flow of rice and hemp-laden cascoes, government launches, carrying troops and supplies to the army operating north, the other the main road, a much traveled but wretchedly kept thoroughfare from Calamba and the Laguna de Bay district, to Manila.

Besides the legitimate traffic there was a flourishing illegal one in ammunition for the insurgents, and vino, the vile native rum, for the American soldiers. Billy, now in command of "B" troop, was kept busy "hiking" from morning until night, trying

to break up the smuggling. No time for poker or any other amusement; it was all hard work these days, for he was the only officer with the troop.

Just as Billy and his men were about played out with their daily hikes in the rainy season, the Third Battalion was ordered up to Santa Anna, and with it came Mrs. Major.

Billy had known her ever since he could remember. His father and the Major had served in the same regiment for twenty-five years out in Arizona and Colorado.

A lump came into the poor, homesick boy's throat as he read her gay, cordial, little letter, telling him she was coming, and please to find her a house.

The "bungalow" which had been the residence of the Spanish governor of the province was secured, and Billy set to work with a force of natives and soldier prisoners to make it not only habitable, but comfortable and pretty. The furniture was begged, borrowed, and, I am afraid, "looted." The result, however, was charming, and so Mrs. Major thought when she arrived, worn out after her long, hot, dusty drive.

"Billy, how can I ever repay you, you dear boy!" she exclaimed.

"Knock some sense into the head of that old curmudgeon at home, so that Polly can come out to me," said Billy, with a somewhat doleful smile.

Mrs. Major knew all about Billy's love affair. However, she only laughed, but she thought to herself, "There is a young goose near at hand that needs sense knocked into him, I'm thinking."

With the coming of Mrs. Major life at Santa Anna became more bearable; she was a bit of civilization in herself. Blue shirts and faded khaki no longer passed muster at mess, not even at tiffin, the most informal meal of the day. Then Mrs. Major instituted Sunday dinner. It brought the tears to the eyes of those home-sick fellows when they sat down at a table set with a table-cloth, napkins, silver, and china, while Sam Sing, the Chino cook who had learned to cook in Portland, Ore., brought

in fried chicken, tomatoes with mayonnaise, and finally peach ice cream.

Billy found only one thing detrimental in the coming of the Third Battalion. With it came a genial little poker crowd, and almost before he knew it, poor Billy had capitulated, and played regularly every Saturday night, sticking manfully to his promise, however, not to play more than once a week.

When Mrs. Major found that Billy was spending his Saturday evenings with the junior mess she taxed him with having

yielded to temptation.

"Well, a fellow must have some amusement," he urged. "I promised Polly that I wouldn't play more than once a week, and I don't. And I never play for more than I can afford. I'm always 'way ahead, too. You can't lose much with a ten-cent limit."

"Oh, yes, my boy. I've heard all that before. How much did you win Saturday night?"

"A hundred 'Mex,'" was the nonchalant reply.

"A neat sum, Billy, for a ten-cent limit."

She was an old army woman and knew her poker. Billy flushed, and there was a perceptible pause in the conversation.

Suddenly Mrs. Major's eyes twinkled. A long line of peculiar-shaped little white garments, flapping in the wind from a near-by nipa house, had given her a sudden inspiration as she eyed the ten five dollar gold pieces the young officer jingled in the palm of his hand.

"Billy, I'll wager anything you like you won't have a single one of those this day week at tiffin."

"Mrs. Major, you horrify me. I thought nothing would ever induce you to gamble."

"Ordinarily nothing would, young man, but there are exceptions to all rules, and this is one."

"What will you bet, madam? I'll give you big odds."

Mrs. Major thought a moment. Then she said: "Here's my wager, Billy. A week from to-day—this is Wednesday—you must have these identical gold pieces to show me at tiffin; if

you lose and have spent them, you give me your promise not to play a game of cards for money for two years. If I lose, I give you a hundred of the best Manila cigars to be had."

"I take you, madam. Order my cigars at once, please. This

is a dead easy proposition," was the gay reply.

Rapidly the week rolled around. Saturday evening the junior mess had in vain urged Billy to join in the usual little game.

"I have my reasons, fellows," was all he would say, "but I'll play you double next week."

At seven o'clock the following Wednesday morning, just as Billy, fresh from his morning shower bath, in cool, pale-blue silk pajamas, was sitting down to his early breakfast of fruit, coffee, and toast, feeling at peace with the world, his "muchacho" handed him a note from Mrs. Major.

"Dear Billy," it read. "The Senora Pacita Mendez has asked me to request you to stand godfather for her son and heir. Her husband would have waited upon you in person, but he was

suddenly called away.

"But they will deem it a great honor if the Senor Lieutenant will do them this favor, etc. And really, Billy, you can't in decency refuse. Mass will be at eight. I will stop for you on my way to church," concluded Mrs. Major.

Billy groaned in spirit. No; he couldn't refuse. The Senora was the most prominent Filipino lady in the town, young and pretty, too. He wrote a hasty acceptance to Mrs. Major, finished his breakfast somewhat gloomily, then, with the aid of his boy and several emphatic words, he got himself into a fresh suit of white duck, just in time to join Mrs. Major on her way to the church.

The street was filled with little family groups, the center of each being a tiny brown Filipino baby surrounded by admiring relatives. The two soon found themselves one with the procession, all hurrying to the church.

The babies were arrayed in the most gorgeous baptismal robes of sheerest lawn, trimmed with quantities of real lace. Mrs. Major simply raved over them, but Billy was not responsive.

Wednesday in the Philippines is the universal christening day. If the sun shines the children are brought from far and near to every barrio which possesses a church, and the whole place assumes the air of a "fiesta." The gorgeous robes which the little things wear, however, are only hired for the occasion, and as soon as the ceremonies are over they are returned to the owners, who immediately wash them and hang them out to dry, ready for renting the next week.

It was the knowledge of this curious custom of a regular christening day that had suggested to Mrs. Major her little stratagem.

All during the Mass the babies wailed and poor Billy got more and more nervous. As soon as it was over Mrs. Major beckoned the young man to join the christening party at the baptistry, just inside the door on the left hand side.

The old Padre was very dexterous, from long practise, and the ceremonies were soon finished, with only a mild protest from the tiny Filipino. There was great handshaking and congratulating among the elders, during which Mrs. Major presented her godson with an elaborate silver cup. Then she looked at Billy, as if expecting him to do likewise. Poor fellow! He looked perfectly blank and flushed scarlet with shame and vexation.

"Billy," whispered Mrs. Major, "you surely haven't forgotten a christening gift?"

"What shall I do?" he replied, in an agonized tone of entreaty.

Mrs. Major turned her back on him; her strategy was working so perfectly that she was afraid her face would give her away. She appeared to think deeply, then said:

"Have you a gold piece with you?"

"Yes; plenty of them," eagerly.

"Give Grandmamma Mendez one, wishing it may bring good luck to the baby."

Immensely relieved, Billy made his gift with smiling face; it was enthusiastically received. Just then the Padre approached and begged that the gracious Senora and the most honorable and

generous Senor Lieutenant would stand for some of his poorer children.

There was much good-humored laughing and exclaiming among the humbler natives who stood waiting their turn. Billy had not noticed Mrs. Major speaking aside with the good Padre, or he might have suspected her evil designs.

"Oh, I say, Mrs. Major!" he protested now. "I can't god-father all those kids. Do help me out of this mess."

"The quickest way out of it is to accept," she replied, calmly, and before he knew it the young officer was renouncing "Satan and all his pomps and works" for a bewilderingly rapid succession of brown atoms.

When it was all over Mrs. Major whispered: "I haven't a penny, and we must make them a gift. Give each mamma a gold piece. I will go halves and settle with you later."

Only too relieved with this easy way out of an embarrassing situation, Billy delivered up the last of his poker winnings with a kindly smile and speech to each small godchild, absolutely without thought as to future consequences.

Billy was a bit late for tiffin that day. The Third Battalion tiffined and dined at a general mess. Mrs. Major greeted him with a gay "This is our day of settlement, young man."

"I hope you are prepared to pay up, Billy," interrupted the Major, "I've never yet won a bet from my wife. Show up your poker money."

Billy gave a little gasp.

"Why—why," he stammered, "I gave it to you this morning for those beastly kids."

"A bet is a bet. No more poker, Master Billy," was all the satisfaction he got.

The young officer's face was a study as he saw how cleverly he had been outwitted. There was a roar of laughter from the mess. "It's on you, Billy; set 'em up, set 'em up." Which the young man proceeded to do—in ginger ale, for Mrs. Major was strictly temperance.

After tiffin Mrs. Major took the young fellow to one side.

"Billy, Polly's sister sails on the Buford from New York next month; her husband is in the Thirty-first Infantry, you know. Cable the old gentleman your promise, and ask Polly to come out. She will."

She did, and they had the prettiest sort of an army wedding in Manila some three months later.

One of the gifts of the bride's was a check for fifty dollars, inclosed in a note which read:

"Have spent the original, but this represents my last poker winnings. Have sworn off forever.

BILLY."

A LUCKY LOSS.

BY EUGÉNIE UHLRICH.

WE had been telling queer and mysterious experiences, and now it was Rowland's turn. He was a civil and mechanical engineer, who had traveled far and wide, and was noted for his tales, so we ostentatiously moved our chairs closer, and our hostess turned the lights lower.

Rowland, laughing, said:

It is not so bad as that. But this has always seemed to me to be the case, that the most mysterious things are the simplest when one comes to find the solution, their very simplicity making them obscure. When I went to college from my father's farm, my allowance was hardly enough to cover necessities, so I had little chance to acquire fashionable or expensive experiences. Perhaps I got through all the sooner. When the end of my college course approached, the least of my troubles was the class badge. So, when the jeweler's agent called to get our orders, I went down absent-mindedly, looked at the design, and had no particular conception of it beyond that it was red and white, the college colors. He asked me some questions about what setting I preferred, and a ruby was the only red stone of which I could think. Then he asked me something about the number of stones, and I, probably with an idea of saving time and money, or, more probably still, with no idea at all, answered, "One will do."

"One!" he repeated, and looked me over rather sharply; but I happened to have on my one good suit because my other one had to be sent up for repairs, so perhaps he took me to be one of the

nabobs.

"Yes," I answered. And I thought, "How many does he think I can put in?" But I did not ask that. Wish I had.

A few days later I was sent for to see a gentleman from the city. He explained, in such persuasively apologetic tones that they still remain in mind as models of that style of conversation, that there was only one ruby large enough to fill my order in the City of New York. It was in the hands of a French family much reduced in circumstances, and his firm had meant to buy it for me. But the family found that it had mysteriously and completely disappeared from its keeping-place, with absolutely no clew as to how or when or through whom. There was another ruby of the right size and color known to be in the possession of the Chester family of England, and they might sell it, because they, too, had suffered severe losses of late. But it would be a delicate bargain to negotiate, a special agent would have to be sent on the next steamer to get it here in time, and the transaction would cost about forty thousand dollars. Well, I suppose in these days, when millionaires' sons go to college, such things are possible. But, oh, picture my feelings! My legs shook so I could hardly stand up. Forty thousand dollars! Forty thousand cents was an extravagant fortune to me at that time. I managed to say something about some other design, with my mouth almost stiff with fright at the thought of what might have happened to me in my monumental ignorance.

"Just plain enamel," I added, fortunately having caught that phrase from one of the fellows, also hard up, just a few minutes before.

The agent's blandness seemed to harden into something like haughtiness, and he left me very quickly then. I sat down, and wiped my face, and tried to thank heaven for my escape from having to spend the rest of my life paying for my class badge, and not being sure at that if I could hope to die out of debt.

I came to the city immediately after graduating, and, thanks to my uncle, at once got a good opening. After several dissatisfied changes in boarding-houses, I was told of a place out of the

ordinary kept by an old French lady. I had learned a little since spring. The ruby probably opened my eyes. So, while I sat in the parlor, I noticed the rare bric-à-brac, the bits of antique furniture, and a portrait of a beautiful French girl in the style of forty years ago, and the reduced French family and their stone kept running in my mind. The gentlest of rustlings stirred the air, and I turned, to see a soft-haired old lady in a plain black silk dress and a lace cap. I remember hearing of a man who wanted a wife who would be a beautiful old woman. And, indeed, it is the beauty of old age before which we must bow the lowest. Time takes away alike the charms and the defects of the flesh, and leaves the sublime spirit to shine through, if the spirit is sublime; and if it is not, well, then there is no ugliness like an ugly old age. I arose to my feet, and wished that the times when it was proper for a man to sink on his knee and kiss the hand of a lady were not past. Of course, I stayed. She could not have driven me away.

There was a maid at the house who had shared the luck of the family for many years, though she still preserved a pert and trim manner and a loose-hung tongue. I confess to giving her tacit encouragement to talk, for the lot of Madame Le Gendre appealed to me, not from mere curiosity, but sympathy. One rainy Sunday morning, when I could not go out, she was "doing up my room," as she called it. The papers that morning were full of a famous diamond robbery.

"It's the queerest thing," she said, "how things do happen, and the queerest are those that are never found out. Now, nobody ever made a fuss about our great ruby, and I'm sure it was worth more than that whole lot of diamonds put together."

"What about it?" I said, indifferently as possible, though great rubies had acquired a certain personal and exciting interest for me.

"Well, you know—" she said, "and don't you ever let on to madame that I told, but then you don't seem like the rest of the boarders, you're more like one of us—madame thought, last spring, she would have to sell the Le Gendre ruby, at last. But then the city bought for a park that little land she had left, and that helped us out."

"But what about the ruby?" I said. One had to keep calling Nancy back to her topic, if one ever wanted to get the end of her stories. You will observe that her name was Nancy, and that she was also a Celt, but from another side of the Channel than madame.

"Well," Nancy continued, "no one knew where madame kept the ruby, not even Mis' Henriette nor me. Didn't we all feel bad? Mis' Henriette—little Henry's mother, you know—just got sick. But old madame never said a word, not even when she first found out that it was gone. She went to the casket, and took out the hand magnifying-glass, and kind of looked at the casket. Maybe, thinking that she was going to sell the ruby anyhow, she did not mind me being behind her and watching her. She put her hand down on one of the little curls near a corner, and then another lid flew open.

"'Oh,' she said, as if it hurt her, 'it ees not zere! Nancee,'

you know how she talks, 'call Mis' Henriette!'

"It came out then that she kept that ruby all the time in that box with the double bottom. But how did it get away, when no one ever knew where it was, and nobody left in the family to spend money, like Mis' Henriette's husband used to do, and no one but the family ever going into madame's room?"

"No one else?" I asked.

"Oh, there was that Katy who used to mind little Henry and dust the halls. She used to sit in there with the child sometimes, but she was that stupid we had to send her away just the day before. She couldn't have told the Le Gendre ruby from a piece of red glass."

There were others, I thought, not unlike Katy in that respect at least, and that stupidity gave me an idea.

"Did madame ever let little Henry play with that box?"

"Of course not," said Nancy.

Now, you see, I am the oldest of ten children, and I ought to know something about the way children act.

"Do you think Katy might have let him play with the box?"

"Oh, there's no telling what she might have done, she was that stupid," said Nancy, with her most self-righteous air.

"Do you know where Katy lives?"

"No," she said; "I don't even know her name. It was the washerwoman's daughter brought her here. Though she was telling me that her mother and father were dead, and so she came over to this country all alone, and her aunt was that mean to her—"

"Where does the washerwoman live?"

Nancy brought herself back to the subject with an aggrieved air.

"Well, now," she said, "the cook can tell. I don't have nothing to do with her myself."

And so after many inquiries Katy was arrived at.

Yes, she did know the box. She did let Henry play with it when madame was gone. He didn't seem to do it any hurt, and he liked it so. Did the second lid ever open? Yes; one morning, the bottom seemed to come up in the queerest way. Was there anything under it? Nothing but a bit of red glass out of a belt buckle, or something like that. Henry wanted it, and she let him play with it. Then he dropped it behind the couch. She couldn't find it, and gave him some candy so he'd forget about it. She did not tell madame, because she did not want her to know that Henry had the box when madame did not want him to have it.

O sancta simplicitas, there was a pair of us!

I went home with my heart thumping so that it seemed too big for my vest. What if they had cleaned house since then? Finally I decided to tell Nancy. The next morning, after a long, long night, while madame was out for her marketing and for early Mass, and Mrs. Henriette down in the dining-room, Nancy and I searched and searched, I murmuring prayers mixed with imprecations against Nancy's tireless tongue, keeping up its ceaseless lamentations and guesses. At last, there it was—there it was, stuck so tight in a crack that it was almost out of sight!

When madame came, and between us we managed to tell her,

she turned a little whiter, and her hands shook as she laid them on my shoulders and kissed me on both cheeks.

"Merci, merci!" she said. "It will be for Henri."

But I have a blessing of my own for little Henry. I am going to help him get a chance myself in this world, if I can, for losing that stone just at the right time for his grandmother and for me.

"Besides," said our hostess, "they say you are going to marry his mother."

AN IRISH BISMARCK.

BY EUGÉNIE UHLRICH.

"Now what do you think of that? You say you're in love with Martha and Martha's in love with you, but you're afraid to tell her father for fear he'd say no. And if he said no, what would happen?" asked old Martin Reilly of his nephew John.

"Well," said John, "I think Martha would feel very bad, and she might even think she oughtn't to see me any more if the old man once told her that she mustn't. This way we can at least be friendly, and hope that something will occur to turn his mind."

"And what has he got against you, John?" asked Martin Reilly, looking admiringly at his strapping nephew with his darkblue eyes and curly dark hair. "There isn't a girl in the county that's too good for you, John."

John smiled a little.

"I wouldn't be too sure that the girls think so," he said, modestly. "What's bothering me is how to get old man Schleier to think that I'm good enough for his daughter."

"What is it he has against you?" asked Martin Reilly once more.

"Oh, nothing much, I suppose, except that I'm not German."

"H-m-m," said Martin Reilly, with fire in his eye. "What's he got against the Irish?"

John shrugged his shoulders, but did not answer. He was not going to make it an international discussion. Uncle Martin kept on grumbling under his breath for a few minutes. Finally he broke out again.

"I have an idea, John. I don't suppose the tactics that will

catch an Irishman will work wid a German in courtin'. I know blamed well they don't in politics. Why, I've seen this here county lined up solid to win, except for a lot of spunky Germans who wouldn't come in. They're that set on havin' their own way that they'd stick to a brace o' bow-legged mules against a 2.30 team if they took a notion to the mules first."

"There might be times," said John, thoughtfully, "when the mules 'd be the most useful."

"Well, that ain't the question now, John, as I can see—don't be disturbin' me wid fool talk when I'm tryin' to plan a winning campaign fer you. I don't know but what me experience in politics 'll stand in a courtship, and that is what set me thinkin' of this here Bismarck, that was such a fine boss and statesman among the Germans. Now, Bismarck, it seems, had a way that went wid the Germans in love as well as in war, and old Schleier being a dyed-in-the-wool Dutchman couldn't mind any one followin' Bismarck's example, now, could he?"

"What's that?" said John, looking interested.

"Well, you see," said Uncle Martin, "I can remember reading somewhere that the father of Bismarck's sweetheart, who was a duke or somethin'-I can't be expected to remember them German names—was just about as cranky as old man Schleier. None of his girls could look at a fellow widout he was threatenin' to lock 'em up and swearing to punish the bold lad. When Bismarck fixed his eye on one o' the girls-I think her name was Johanna-the old man was worse than ever, for Bismarck was a young scapegrace then wid little money and not much prospects, but sure he had his wit in the right place. So he never said an ill word to the old man, but bided his time, just as you're doin', John. The point is that Bismarck knew his time, and it's wid a view of enlightenin' you as to that I'm relatin' this tale. Well, then, they had some kind of a party at his father-in-law-tobe's house, and they had one of these dances that they calls cotillyuns. I don't know much what it's like, but I suppose it's somethin' like the Virginia Reel, where everybody's out on the floor in turns. Bismarck hadn't noticed his sweetheart all evening,

nor she him, and the old man was just about thinking how good and obedient and easy-going they both were, when didn't Bismarck go and choose the girl for this dance, that no one ever dances except with his best girl. Bismarck and Johanna were the last couple to have their turn, and when everybody was gone and sat down in their places he still kept on dancing with his sweetheart, and finally wound up by giving her a kiss fair and square right there before everybody. And then Bismarck turned round and told the people there that that kiss was to seal the engagement, and of course they cheered. By that time the old man got his breath and he came down like a thundercloud to see what it meant, but his wife was close behind him and his daughter fell around his neck as soon as he came near enough and between the two women they had him fixed, 'For,' says the old lady, 'don't you make a scandal now and say anything that'll spoil Johanna's chances in life.' And the daughter says, 'Don't you worry none, father, he's able to take care of me!' And so he ended up by shaking hands with young Bismarck and telling him he was glad he was going to have such a fine son-in-law."

"Well, that was an idea," said John. "But," he added dubiously, "Bismarck didn't have old man Schleier to face."

"Away wid you now, what's come over you? Do you think that if Bismarck could face the old man who was a duke, or a lord, or somethin' like that, you ain't equal to facing an old German farmer on the Broken Kettle road?"

John whittled away at the stick in his hand and maintained a beautiful silence.

"Small consolation I have in me old days from a chickenhearted nephew like that. Why when I was a young man—"

"Well, whatever you did when you were a young man," said John impertinently, as he got up and walked away to get his horse ready to drive over to Schleier's for the dance, "there was little use in it, for you're not married yet, uncle."

"Ye good-for-nothin' rascal," called out Uncle Martin, with a show of anger that died away in a chuckle as he watched his nephew swinging along. "Say, John," he called after him then, "remember one thing—and that is that Bismarck was sure of his sweetheart's mother before he attacked the father."

* * * * *

When John Reilly reached Schleier's place, buggies and springwagons crowded the big open space around which the barn and stables were built in a half square—the court they would have said in Europe, and, indeed, old man Schleier always spoke of his "Hof," to the mystification of his Irish neighbors.

Joe Schleier and a hired man were helping the men put up their horses as they came, while the girls went over to the house, or wandered toward the barn—where the gleaming lantern lights and the occasional twang of a fiddle tuning up told of the dancing to come later in the soft September evening. Old man Schleier himself stood on the porch greeting the arrivals. He held out his hand to John and nodded pleasantly enough, but fixed him with a keen eye. Martha passed and repassed, however, without even glancing at John, and the old man's face relaxed.

Presently Mrs. Schleier, fat and good-natured, came over from the barn. She held out her hand to John with a broad smile.

"So, so!" Her English was meager and difficult, but her smile made a warm spot around John's uneasy heart. "You spik mit Mart'a?" she asked. John's face suddenly colored dark-red, and he glanced apprehensively over his shoulder in the direction of the old man.

Mrs. Schleier nodded understandingly—her English was altogether too slow for adequate expression, so she patted John's hand a little and then a word of approval seemed to come to her happily, and she nodded again.

"All right, all right; du bis all right, Tschon—," there was a glance over his shoulder, gauging the weather-signs on her husband's face, and she went on to another young man and talked to him in German; but John noticed she did not pat the other fellow's hand. Martha had often told John that her mother liked him, and she looked as if she meant to show him her liking to-day. His Uncle Martin's story, which had seemed such a joke,

came back to him. Ah, but it would not do—it was not to be thought of here. Before great folk like Bismarck's people-in-law such a bluff might go, for, of course, they would not want any talk about their daughter. Then John's face flushed. What about Martha? Old man Schleier's daughter had no more call to be talked about than had that other girl, and the old man himself was as careful of his girls as ever "any of those way-up fellows," said John to himself. That was certain, and it made matters all the harder, for John rather realized, if his uncle did not, that Bismarck's people had a settled code of conduct, while old man Schleier would be a law unto himself in the wrath of the moment.

John danced perfunctorily with one girl and then another and once or twice had a chance for a passing whisper to Martha. Between times he reflected miserably that she seemed to be having a very pleasant evening, and wondered how all was going to end. To Martha, on her part, it seemed that all the girls at the dance had their eyes on John, and each time she joined in a new dance it seemed to her she must leave her partner and go over to John. Her only solace was when their hands met with a reassuring pressure in the figures of the quadrilles.

Suddenly Jimmy Mangan, who was calling out the changes, cried, "Ladies' choice for a Vi'ginia Reel." Martha started and looked toward John over in a corner under a lantern, its round shadow falling on his dark head and his eyes gleaming out at her. Suddenly it came into her heart like a pain that some other girl would ask him, and as for herself, she could not bring herself to ask any one else. She saw John start forward a little and if there were any other girl who had planned to ask him, neither he nor Martha ever knew it.

"Seems to me," whispered Jimmy Mangan during a wait, "that you haven't danced much with Martha to-night, John. 'Fraid of the old man? We'll have to make the best of your chance while you have it," and he chuckled as John blushed.

Up and down the couples went, until each had had a turn, and then they waited to hear the "All promenade," but Jimmy sang out instead, "All waltz," and winked at John as he did so.

The blood rushed to John's heart, instead of his face, this time, and he felt himself trembling as he and Martha commenced the turns of the waltz. Here it was—just like Uncle Martin's story. He knew the fiddlers would never stop playing as long as any one kept the floor, and he and Martha were surely good to dance them all down. And what then? Round and round they glided and one by one the other couples went to their seats, and at last John and Martha were dancing all alone. He swept the room with a quick glance and he saw old man Schleier's eye fixed upon him with a wrathy glint in it, but beside him stood Mrs. Schleier, benign and approving. It was as if the scene had been set on the Bismarck model.

"Martha, darling," John whispered on the impulse of the moment, "will you be mad at me if I do something terribly bold?"

Martha was nearly breathless, but she shook her head and smiled. So John gave a few more turns until they were well in the middle of the room, when he stopped dancing and waited until the fiddles stopped. Then he drew Martha toward him again and kissed her before everybody. A little gasp went around the room, and then John spoke out, looking straight at the old man, "This is to announce that Martha and me's engaged to be married."

The old man looked for a moment as if he were going to have an apoplectic fit, and John was truly frightened, but Martha came closer to him. He saw Mrs. Schleier put her hand on her husband's arm as he started forward. She said something to him which John could not hear and could not have understood if he had.

"So, so," said the old man, when he came up in front of John and Martha, "vat kind of foolishness is dis?"

Martha freed herself from John's arms, and going up to her father, said gently:

"No foolishness, father, only a little surprise. And you always said John was such a fine fellow." Her father looked at her as if he thought she was dreaming.

"Well, didn't you?" she asked boldly.

"Maybe I said he vas goot enough for ein Irishman."

John bore the modification meekly. "I heard once," he said then, "that this was the way the great Bismarck was engaged, and I thought maybe it was the way that Germans do," and at this a smile went around the room. Even the old man seemed to catch its feeling.

"So," he said with a sarcastic chuckle, "you want to be like Bismarck. You—"

"Don't you see, father," said Martha, "he's half a German already and we're only engaged, and maybe he will be in the legislature yet."

"Hm, engaged, you engaged!" The dreaded storm seemed gathering again, but Joe Schleier, who really liked John very well, commenced clapping his hands, and the others joined in, until Jimmy Mangan called out, "Three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Schleier and three more for Bismarck and Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Reilly to-be, and then let's have a German waltz." They cheered and cheered until the roof of the barn shook, and presently the band played "Lauterbach," and John danced with old Mrs. Schleier and Martha with her father.

* * * * *

"The more power to Bismarck and all belonging to him," said Uncle Martin Reilly the next morning when his nephew told him. "He was the lad that knew how to get his way, and here's another," and he slapped John resoundingly on the back.

And that is how John Reilly was Bismarck Reilly ever after, except when he signed his name to the marriage certificate.

THE LITTLE POSTULANT.

BY MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

On the day of the great storm the Superior of the convent of Saint Maur had found a little shoe in a bed of pansies-her particular care—in the garden. It was of white kid, probably belonging to a child of two or three years of age. It was lined with silk and over the instep was a tiny turquoise buckle. The great wind-storm of this day and the night before had ceased at three o'clock; it was then that the Superior had found most of her oaks robbed of their leaves and branches, and her pansies untouched by the wind. A sailboat had been driven into the bay in the early morning. It was high up in the sand, and in it were a dead sailor boy—evidently the pilot—and a richly dressed woman, so battered by the wind and waves that she was beyond recognition. Later, a man discovered in the grass, under one of the dismantled oaks, a little girl of two. Her dress was draggled, filled with sand and torn; but she was asleep. She did not open her brown eyes from under the moist tangle of golden hair until she was in the Mother Superior's room. Then she held out her little hands, and, wet as she was, she was warmly clasped in the arms of the Superior.

Months passed. It was discovered that, before the storm broke, an American and his wife, who had come down from Paris, had engaged the young sailor to take them for a sail beyond the breakers at Pointe Rochette. Nobody remembered whether there was a child with them or not. Here the matter rested.

It was presumed that the man had been washed overboard, that the child had crawled from the boat, and, creeping under the iron railing of the convent gate, had found refuge in the garden. The child spoke English. Her name, she said, was Agnes. The rest of it nobody could make out. After the search for clues was over and none found, the Mother Superior kept the child.

"But, Reverend Mother, we are so poor," urged the assistant Superior, who was much younger. "We need so many things."

"Saint Teresa once said that a community of nuns would do well to care for a little child. You remember that—and, since Saint Teresa has said it, I will retain Agnes here, that our Sisters may keep young of heart."

"But, Mother, the expense—the responsibility."

"You are becoming too old and prudent," said the Superior, laughing. "So old and so prudent that you need to hear the prattle of a little child more than all. She shall be your special care, Sister Marie. Ah, Sister, this little child will bring a blessing—a help some time when we need it most. I have lived long, and I know that God does not forget those who succor these small, helpless beings!"

"What could one say to this?" Sister Marie asked herself; and, as the days went by, she became more light-hearted, more cheerful, more really nun-like, under the influence of the little child. The white shoe was shown to all strangers that came to the convent; there it was, just as if it had never passed through the death-dealing sea, snow-white, with the heart-shaped blue buckle, and the name "Agnes" written on the silk lining.

Agnes gradually ceased to be a little girl. There was a time when the Superior had seriously wondered whether she should not be sent into the world; but Agnes would have nothing to do with the world.

"I am happy here," she said. "I love the vineyard, the orchard, the garden—above all, the chapel. I am not a burden. The Sister Économe tells me that my illuminations have paid the last of the debt on the organ. When I am old enough, I will be a nun and pray always for my father and mother."

"What could one do?" Sister Marie asked all the other Sisters.

In time, the Mother Superior passed away, and Agnes took thousands of pansies to cover her coffin in the night, and the Sisters let her do it, out of pity for the young heart that was bowed under its first grief, and, prudently, they also let her weep till she was tired beside the coffin.

When time had passed, Agnes became a postulant, and a happier postulant never lived.

"How I love my home!" she said to Sister Marie, who was now the Superior. "Never shall I leave it or thee, dearest Mother. All things in life change, except these little nests of our dear Lord, the convents!"

While Agnes was still a postulant an elderly man, dignified in appearance, with a military air, came to visit the convent, for it was one of the sights of Valency-sur-Mer; and the late Mother was famous for having saved the country-side from poverty by teaching the peasant women the almost-lost art of making the celebrated lace of Valency. He had gone through the place with a melancholy air. The portress had noticed this.

"You are alone, Monsieur?"

"Alone," he said. "Alone. I have not even a child."

"Ah, even convents are lonely if there be not one little child there," said the portress, as he entered. He did not stay long; he merely paid his respects to the Superior, asked questions about the lace-making, and went back to his hotel, leaving a gift for the furtherance of the industry that, by its large amount, amazed Mother Marie.

"His name is Ringgold," the Mother said. "He has been a Major in the American army; he is not, as yet, of the faith; we must pray for him every day."

The little postulant's opinion that convents do not change was, it turned out, not sound. The Government had determined that the Sisters of Saint Maur should leave their convent. This new Government had not even the sense of justice of the old anarchy of Robespierre. The Superior of Robespierre's day had been the benefactor of the district, and she had gone boldly to Paris when the Terrorist threatened her convent, and spoken with such earnestness that he had protected her, and given her the property of her brother, who had emigrated. This she held as a

sacred trust; but the Republic of 1903 was less just and clement than the bloody Maximilian.

The rumor of the acceptance of the Law of Associations reached Valency-sur-Mer; but nobody believed that the beloved Sisters of Saint Maur would be disturbed. They were the benefactors of the district. The grandmothers had loved them; the grandchildren loved them. Why should they be disturbed? When the news came that the Sisters must leave their convent, the countryside was in an uproar. Even the Reds, who talked loudly in the cabarets of Free Thought, were astonished and indignant. The convent was poor, but its buildings-erected by the grateful brother of that courageous Mother who had saved his estate under Robespierre-were handsome, and its garden-laid out under Louis XIV .- was beautiful. Hundreds of men and women left their work to defend the Sisters. It was useless; the soldiers of the Republic confronted the "mob," and once, when the men ranged themselves in front of the gate, the soldiers fired over the heads of the crowd. At that moment the Sisters filed out, and sobs and imprecations filled the air.

Mother Marie tried to be calm and unmoved, for the Sisters, most of whom had not been outside the convent in a score of years, were as excited and helpless as fluttered doves. She held fast to Agnes, but so numerous were the claims on her attention, that, after the soldiers fired, she missed her. Then Sister Françoise, who had been inclosed for forty years, claimed all her care.

During the shameful struggle, a tall man of a military bearing had sat in a carriage watching it from the corner of the street. He started and uttered an angry exclamation when the soldiers fired. He saw a little Sister, in the habit of a postulant, sway aside and struggle through an open space in the crowd unnoticed. Something seemed to stir in his heart. He rushed forward and caught her in his arms, blood flowing upon him from a wound in her side and dyeing her white habit.

"I have no home," she said, softly. "I am wounded, sir; take me to the church, that I may die."

"No home!" The bearded face became dark, and he was

about to make the air ring with his curses, when the look in her eyes checked him. Blood still flowed from her side; it was evident that she had been struck by a stray bullet.

"To the hotel!" he said to the driver, as he lifted the fragile little figure into the carriage. He took the cushions from the seats, and made her as comfortable as possible.

"No home?" he asked. "And the other Sisters?"

"Some of them have relatives, but I have none; I am an orphan, the child of the convent."

"You shall have a father from this time," he answered, tears filling his eyes. "And I swear that my means shall supply the Sisters with homes in a free country."

A smile illuminated her pale face. She dropped from her nerveless hand a little bag she held, and from it fell a rosary, given to her by Mother Marie, and the little shoe. The Major picked the shoe up and turned it in his hands tremulously. "Agnes," he read—"Agnes!" in his dead wife's writing. He looked, enlightened, into the sweet face of the little postulant; he knew her, and his heart throbbed.

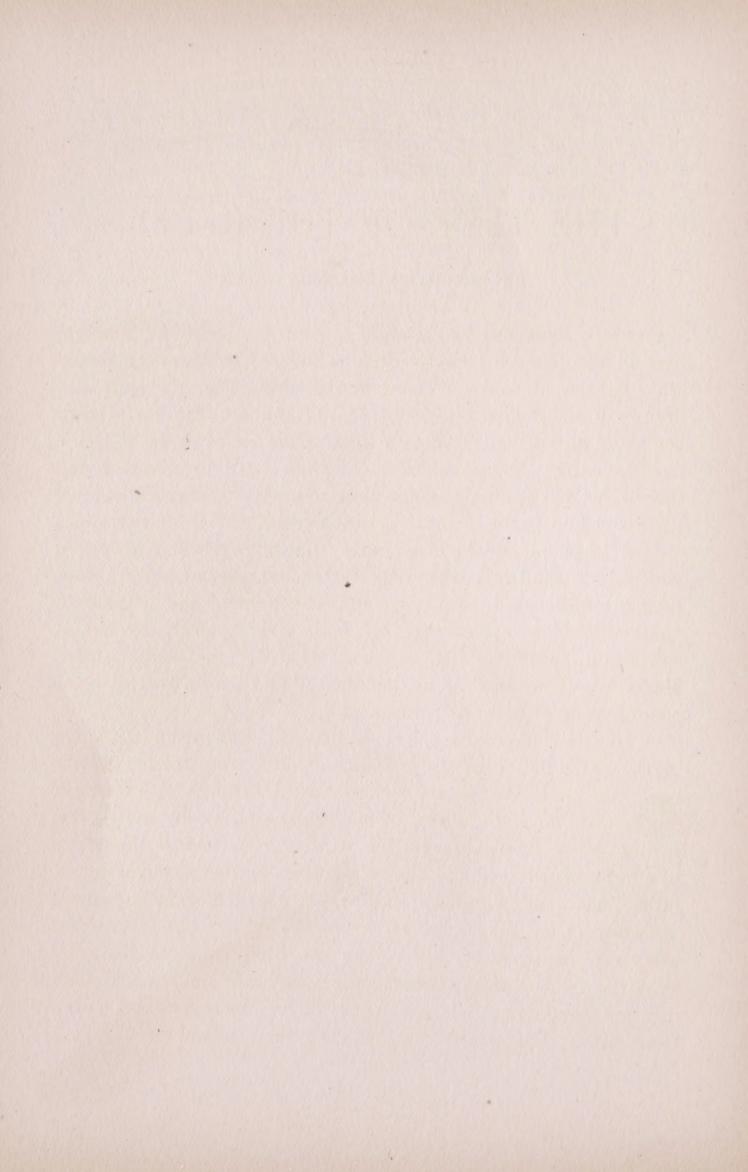
"My child!" he said.

She did not answer.

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"Drive for your life!" he called out. And then, in accents of love and agony, he whispered, "Agnes!"

She did not answer—for she could never answer to any human call in this world.



THE TEST OF THE REBEL.

BY MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

Casimir Strelski had a hard life, but, as some of his neighbors in the tenement house often remarked, that was no reason why he should make it hard for others. Casimir had been brought from Poland by his father and mother. He was a small boy then, but he had lived in a little colony of expatriated Poles, hard-working persons, where aspirations both for Poland and themselves had gradually given place to a settled bitterness against life in general, and it must be admitted that life in particular offered them hot rooms in summer, cold or overheated rooms in winter, the continual whirring of the sewing-machines in these rooms, crowded with workmen and workwomen, and a constant monotony. Casimir married an Irish girl; he had met her at church on one of the few occasions he visited the sacred edifice. Maria was born, and the mother died, and a year after came the passing away of both his parents.

"God has deserted me," he said, as he stood beside the coffin in the little flat, filled to suffocation with sympathizing neighbors. A kind Neapolitan woman passed through the room of death, with the little Maria in her arms, and, as she passed, the spring breeze blew through the window and stirred the white hyacinths on the coffin. Their fragrance seemed to encircle the father, bent, sallow, almost spectral—his long hair falling about his white face. He started as he saw the child. For years after, whenever the scent of flowers came to him, from the shops or from the venders at the street corners, he grew sick, and a bitter rage possessed him. His one chance of happiness had been taken from him. The priest came to him, and talked of the con-

solation that must come to those who endure sorrow for the love of Christ. Strelski broke forth in such words that the priest never came again.

Maria grew to be seven years of age. It was time that she should make her First Communion, the Irish and Italian women, kindly neighbors, said. After his wife's death Strelski had moved away from the colony of his own people. The little Maria at this time was sweet and gentle—of a fineness of manner and air that was lily-like, yet with the rosy cheeks and dark brown hair of her mother. Strelski seemed to dislike her as he disliked the scent of the hyacinths and the thought of God.

He was making a fair living now; there were thirty men and women in the shop he had acquired; he drove them to the limit of his power.

"Who has a right to joy?" he asked, sullenly. "I have had none!"

Maria he seldom saw. He gave the matrons money for her, and roughly bade them keep her out of his way.

"She shall know nothing of God—I will not have it!" he roared.

"Indeed!" said the stout matron, Mrs. O'Toole, facing him. She had just proffered the request about the First Communion.

"Nothing!" he repeated, looking at her fiercely. "I am against all religion."

"Indeed!" she said, ironically, and then, with fine contempt, "I guess you're only a Polish Jew, anyhow. If the poor child had any blood relations, they'd take it out o' you. I believe you married an orphant just to tyrannize over her!"

Strelski turned his back on the angry woman. He went off to one of the atheistical meetings, where, as Mrs. O'Toole said, "The cowards shook their fists at God at a safe distance."

"You'll have to come to God at last," was Mrs. O'Toole's last shot. "You can't prevent your little one's praying for you—nor your wife!"

He caught sight of the little one as he went downstairs, but, though she stretched out her arms, he did not stop to kiss her.

He had an impulse to do it—a little flower seemed to bloom for a moment in his heart. He crushed it; to do otherwise would be to acknowledge, in some vague way, the power of that Being whom he was resolved to defy—and yet the slight figure and the rosy face haunted him. Money he was gaining, power he had, in spite of Heaven! When the men at the meeting applauded his speech against God, he felt that he was conquering; still, before his eyes was the little face, and his heart ached. Joy might lead that way, but to acknowledge the sweetness and purity of the child would be to bow to the Being who had bereft him, He whom he wished to defy.

Mrs. O'Toole had dressed Maria in a white brock and taken her to Mass. Strelski could not prevent this; he had to pretend not to know it. He was shaving in the small living room. Everything about the room was simple and clean; above the bed was a wooden crucifix, the august figure well carved. It had been his wife's, and he had never dared to remove it, though he had thought of doing so once or twice. The windows were open, and the wind of a May Sunday made the white curtains blow inward. He finished wiping his razor as Maria entered alone, in her white hat and frock. Strelski started—the child was so like his wife—and she held in her hand a spray of white hyacinth, which Mrs. O'Toole, who loved flowers, had grown in her window.

"Father," the pleading voice said, "oh, do kiss me, as the other papas kiss their little girls!"

He was touched for a moment, and half turned toward her. "And do let me make my First Communion with the other children."

His eyes flashed. He dared not strike the child. He looked around the room, swearing under his breath. He jumped upon the white, iron bed, and tore the crucifix from the wall. The window was three stories above the street; he thrust aside the curtain, and threw the sacred emblem out, cursing as he flung it to destruction.

"There!" he said. "You know what I mean at last!" Maria's eyes grew dark, and her little face whitened.

"Mother's cross!" she cried. "I must save it! The dear Lord!"

As light as a white blossom in the wind, she sprang upon a chair, and, before Strelski could move, she had jumped from the window, following the crucifix. He sank down upon the bed, unnerved, overwhelmed. The great God had conquered him! He was alone—he saw, in the hundredth time of a second, the fair little face, blood-stained, crushed in the cruel street, and the death of his child was his work. He dared not go to the window. He was dully aware of the scent of the hyacinth in the air, and he knew that he could not escape God. His heart was sick, fear was upon him.

"If, O God," he said, in agony, painfully making his way to the window, "this should be a dream— O Mary in heaven, pray that God may be kinder to me than I—"

He was near the window; he could not look.

"Father!"

The door opened behind him. Maria, her frock rumpled and torn—in her eyes a strange glow, entered, with the crucifix in her arms.

"I fell where it had fallen, on the fire-escape below, and nobody was in Mrs. O'Toole's rooms, so I came up. Oh, father, don't throw the cross out again—mother's cross!"—her voice was choked with tears.

He kissed the cross reverently, and then he caught the amazed child in his arms.

"Christ!" he murmured, softly, and Maria, thinking that he was beginning the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, knelt at his feet, and repeated:

"Christ, hear us!

"Christ, graciously hear us!"

THE OLD GREEN CHEST.

BY MARY F. NIXON-ROULET.

It was a queer old chest, not in the least romantic. Ginevra's carved oaken tomb was beautiful, but this was only a huge pine box painted green, the lid hinged and locked. It had stood in the attic ever since Eustacie could remember; indeed, it had been there when she was born. Her mother had died when she was a baby, and her Aunt Abby, her father's sister, had brought her up in an atmosphere of as strong Puritanism as the grimness of the spinster's name, Abigail Miriam Stone, would indicate.

Eustacie's name had always been a subject of disapproval with the aunt. She had endeavored to have it changed when she came to take charge of her brother's affairs, only to meet with a stern refusal from that gentleman and the remark, "She bears her mother's name." Much as she had disliked her sister-in-law, Miss Abigail Miriam Stone dared not say aught which savored of this to the brother, who adored his wife's memory; so she took out her dislike by calling the child Stacy.

"None of your play-acting names for me," she muttered. "Folks'll think her name is Anastasia, a Christian cognomen, though not quite so pious as Hope or Deliverance, and she shall never know she has any other calling so far as I can keep it," and she set her thin lips in a line of determination.

Fortunately for little Eustacie, she was sweet of heart, gay as her bright-faced mother had been when she married stern John Stone, and went with him to Kansas to live but one short year.

There was a strain of Acadian in her blood, and her little girl showed it in her crisp, black hair and sparkling eyes, though there was some of her father's determination in her firm lips and resolute chin. Her aunt's restrictions had not soured her sweetness, and she had given the old woman genuine love in return for the care so long lavished upon her.

When her father died, Aunt Abigail had sent her away to school, and although at first the sixteen-year-old girl was bitterly homesick and had cried herself almost ill, she soon expanded and bloomed in the genial atmosphere of the pleasant school in the old French town upon the great river's bank. Two years she remained there, her vacations spent with friends, and then, graduated with honors, she went back to her aunt and her home on the prairies. She longed, yet dreaded, to see her aunt, for, much as she loved her, she feared to tell her that she had become a Catholic. Through the life rather than the influence of a school friend, a life of such sweet dutifulness that it appealed to Eustacie as if fed by some hidden spring which she had not, she was led to look into the Catholic faith, and, once instructed, her ardent nature led her to embrace it fervently. To the plea of the priest who instructed her that she should first speak to her friends at home, she replied:

"I have no father and mother, my aunt has no rightful authority over me, but if I go home unbaptized she will see that I never receive the sacrament, for there is no priest nearer than fifty miles. Father, do take me now."

So he consented, and to her soul, warm with the eager first flames of devotion, the Blessed Sacrament came with perfect joy.

Almost immediately afterward she was called home by Miss Stone's illness, and arrived at Prairie Farm to find the stricken woman unconscious. All thoughts save of her aunt's perilous condition were blotted out of the girl's mind. She watched her day and night, praying earnestly that the sick woman might be spared to speak at least once to her ere she died. What was to become of her? She had not a relative in the world that she knew of. Her father had been an orphan, with only the one sister; of her mother's friends she had heard no mention at all. She could not live on there at the farm with black Seeley, the cook, who had been her old mammy, and the farm hands.

"I know how Our Lady felt," she thought, sadly, "adrift in Bethlehem town. But she had St. Joseph to lean upon, and I have no one." Then, her new-found faith asserting itself, "Yes; I have St. Joseph, too, and Our Lord and Our Lady besides, and oh, how selfish I am to be thinking about myself when poor Aunt Abby is dying!"

At last the fever-stricken eyes opened, there was a moment's gleam of recognition in them as they fell on Eustacie's face. Her hand pressed the girl's ever so slightly and the parched lips murmured, haltingly:

"The green chest—your aunt——" There was a faint struggle to say more, and Aunt Abigail was dead.

Eustacie was stunned. Through the days which followed she was like one in a dream. The good doctor's wife came and stayed with her, with the gentle charity of those prairie folk, but after the funeral was over and Aunt Abigail laid to rest beside her brother under the alfalfa where the wind soughed her requiem, she felt that she must go home to her brood of little ones, and gently inquired as to Eustacie's plans.

"I don't know what to do. I have no relatives, Mrs. Folke. I might go back to school. Will you stay with me just till to-morrow and let me think what Aunt Abby would have wanted me to do?"

"Certainly, my dear, as long as you need me," was the kind answer, though the mother heart was full of anxiety for her children.

Trying to rest that afternoon, Eustacie thought over the last few weeks and all they had brought to her of happiness and sorrow.

"If I only knew what to do," she thought. "I wonder what poor Aunt Abby was trying to say to me at the last." Then with a sudden flash of recollection—"The green box—could it be there was something there she wanted me to see? I think I will go and look," and, filled with the idea, she sprang to her feet and ran up the attic steps hurrying to search the old chest.

There it stood, dusty and cobwebby, and she dragged it out into the middle of the floor, opening it eagerly. The faint, sweet scent of lavender floated out, and she saw within her mother's wedding clothes, a snowy heap, the tiny shoes, the gloves, the veil, the satin dress. Softly she laid a fold against her lips, murmuring:

"Sweet little mother, pray for me and tell me what to do."

Beneath was a parcel of letters, neatly folded and tied, and a little white-covered book. She took it in her hand with surprise, seeing the title, *Vade Mecum*, and opening to the flyleaf, she found, written in a delicate hand:

18-

To my little niece and namesake
Marie Eustacie,
With love from Aunt Marie.
May she ever be Mary's Child.
May First.

For a moment she could not grasp the meaning. It was her birthday—was she Marie Eustacie?—then it flashed upon her. Her mother must have had a sister Marie, that was what Aunt Abby had meant. "Your aunt—the green box—" Hurriedly she read the letters, gathering from them that her Aunt Marie was married, that she lived in the South, that she was, oh, blessed thought! a Catholic. At the bottom of the pile was a little bit of paper signed by her mother.

"In case of her father's death, I wish my little daughter to belong to her aunt and godmother, my sister, Marie Poitiers, St. Louis."

"It is a voice from the dead," said Eustacie, and she carried the papers to Mrs. Folke, saying: "See—God has decided all for me. I must go to my aunt."

When, a few weeks later, Prairie Farm was sold and the east-bound train bore away with it Eustacie, to be warmly welcomed to her aunt's heart, it carried also the only treasure the girl had saved from the old home's furniture, the old green chest.

"THE VERY LITTLE ONE."

BY GRACE KEON.

Many and many a day they might be seen—the old man and the little child. The old man, careless of attire, in slouched hat and well-worn coat—bearing on the sleeves and front of it the buttons of the G. A. R.—a sturdy veteran he. The little child, toddling along the paved walk beside him, clinging to the hand he had to stoop to give her. Could one tell, at sight of them, that it was the life's beginner leading him who had turned life's last milestone?

People went out of their way to salute Miles Lester. He was one of the old-timers—one of the men whose money had done much to build up the town; one of the men whose honesty and probity had helped to establish it among its fellows; and one of those on whom fortune had at last turned its frown in the hardest time of all—old age.

No man had been more prosperous than he. Miles Lester never went in for "style," but he had a comfortable home. His wife was one of the best, most gentle and most sympathetic of women; his daughter Agnes followed in the mother's footsteps; his son, Miles, a credit to his name and family—a young man for whom was predicted the highest honors.

Why is it that those who seem most favored by the Lord are, apparently, the least grateful? Miles Lester performed his church duties—occasionally; went to Mass—occasionally. Subscribed liberally to all charitable projects, irrespective of creed, and shrugged his shoulders a little impatiently when reminded

that his faith was not a "living" faith; that his charity was well in its way, but that even charity, "covering a multitude of sins," does not absolve the Catholic from attending Mass on Sunday and from fulfilling the yearly precept of confession and communion; does not absolve the Catholic from daily prayer for the bread of the soul—the grace of God.

That had been six years before. The first heavy cloud on the horizon was trouble with investments. Miles Lester, Jr., came home from college then, expelled, and shortly afterward left the town, going none knew whither. This preying on the mother's mind, she failed day by day, and after a little slipped out of life altogether. Only Agnes was left—and being her mother's daughter, she did her very best to make up to her father for that heavy loss. She postponed her wedding for a year, and would have made the postponement indefinite had not old Miles Lester insisted upon the marriage taking place at the end of that time.

So she married Philip Hasbrouck, and her husband went to live with her in the Lester house, which was still spared them in spite of the cutting-down of income. For a time things went smoothly—although the old man brooded a great deal. His wife's death had embittered him; his son's unfortunate ending of a career on which he had placed many hopes made him rail at the fate that had reserved such trials as these for his old age. Half in scorn, half in mockery, he asked what harder blow could fortune or Providence launch against him.

He was to learn.

He was old, accustomed to the smile of the world, and not its frown. Accustomed to holding his head high, and even, in spite of his democracy, accustomed to the use of that patronizing tone which is permitted from a man to his social inferiors. Deprivation of money, of love, of pride, had not altered his character one jot—nor had sorrow over the three lessened its sternness.

When Philip Hasbrouck had been a year and a half married to Agnes Lester he was one day taken home dead. A part of

the machinery in the engine-room had broken down—and in endeavoring to fix it, the young engineer had lost his life. They carried his body to the house he had left a few hours previously full of high hopes, and happiness, and gay spirits.

Agnes Hasbrouck met them with their ghastly burden. There was no loud weeping—she did not become hysterical. A curious distortion of the lips—almost a smile—as she looked down at the white face. Then she fell. That night old Miles Lester realized that Providence, for its own good reason, had stripped him of everything.

Leaving him, in place of riches, and son, and the man who had been a son to him—in place of daughter and wife and pride and possessions, a wailing little infant that had cost its mother her life.

Kind people flocked to him to help him bear this last most bitter blow. He could not appreciate their sympathy, failing to realize the full extent of his misfortune. One young woman took the baby—one who had been Agnes Lester's very dear friend—who had been with her when she died. There were three little ones in her own house, but she took this one to her heart almost passionately.

The man's helplessness merged into hopelessness. There was enough and to spare for his few needs—black poverty had not been forced upon him. The old woman who had been with the family since old Miles was young Miles, saw to his meals and kept house for him. He ate next to nothing. He spoke little. He wandered from room to room with an apathetic look upon his face, as if he were seeking vainly for something or some one hidden from him which search might discover.

It was whispered about that Miles Lester's brains were touched.

He had never asked to see his daughter's child, although six months had passed since its birth, and it was now a thriving, lusty babe, fat and rosy and happy in the mother-care that Anne Dillon gave it. She had stood sponsor for it, giving it the name that Agnes had loved—her mother's name, Lucy. But when

she heard the rumor of old Miles Lester's growing affliction, a daring resolve came to her. She took the baby and pressed it to her lovingly.

"It's like giving up my own," she said—tears in her eyes and tears in her voice, too. "Yet I must risk it, darling. And if the worst comes—which God prevent—I can have you back again."

So she dressed the child in its soft white baby things and laughed at it and tossed it into chuckling good humor. Then she made her way across the lots that divided the humble Dillon cottage from the more pretentious Lester dwelling.

"Where is Mr. Lester?" she asked of the housekeeper. "I have brought him a visitor to-day." And she settled the baby

more firmly on her shoulder.

The old woman, half-blind, half-deaf, half-comprehending, motioned toward the parlor. And there Anne Dillon found him.

Her heart failed her as she entered. There were signs of neglect—the housekeeper could no longer pay attention to details, and the young servant-maid was evidently careless. Anne Dillon stood at the door, looking about her at the room which had been so spotlessly clean, so daintily homelike when Agnes had been there; stood looking finally at the broken-down man who had lost everything that could make life dear to him. Old and shriveled and aged, he crouched in a chair at the window—not a gleam of expression on his face—not a gleam of expression in his eyes.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Lester!" she called, cheerily, in her young and cheery voice. "I thought I'd come over to see you to-day. It's too fine to be indoors. Why don't you open the window, and let in some of the fresh air? It's wonderful weather."

He nodded assent—turning his head toward the street—toward the sunshine playing hide-and-seek on the dappled pavement and dusty road—cognizant, as if for the first time, that such a thing as God's sunshine existed.

"It looks to be so," he answered her absently. "It looks to be

so—" He brought his puzzled eyes to hers—and fear contracted the young woman's pitiful heart.

"Surely you remember me?" she said, and her voice broke, and there was a great lump in her throat. "Oh, surely you remember Anne Dillon, Mr. Lester—"

A spasm of pain seemed to quiver across his face.

"Yes," he said. "Yes. I remember you, Anne, very well."

The girl—she was only that in years, and her babies had made her even younger than her age, for all the care they were—came forward, pulling a chair toward him with her free hand, and seating herself beside him.

"Look!" she said. "I have brought you a baby, to cheer you up—a happy, little, gurgling, pretty baby! Just look at her, Mr. Lester."

"A fine baby," he answered—if capable of feeling at all, being annoyed with Mrs. Dillon for intruding on his privacy. "A very fine baby."

But he was not interested.

"I think she knows you," said Anne. "I think she does know you. There! Did you see those dimples, Mr. Lester?"

She brought the joyous, chuckling baby nearer to him, held her out to him; rested her on his shrunken knees. Forced to it, he looked at her, seeing her this time. Something in the tiny face attracted him.

"She has her mother's eyes," said Anne, in a hushed voice.

"Did you see, ever, such cornflower blue in any pair of eyes but one? And her hair—it is like the yellow grain itself, as soft and fine and beautiful as Agnes' own—"

"My God!" he said under his breath. He stared at the mite—who clutched at his finger wildly and caught it and tried to pull it to her mouth. "Oh, my God!" he repeated again, moaning and sobbing. "Oh, my God, but it is Agnes' child! It is my little girl's baby—it is my—little—girl's—baby—"

It is a sorrowful thing to see a woman weep; it is a pitiful thing to hear a man weep. But when sobs rend the breast of the old as sobs burst from this man's now, then it is time to feel the anguish of suffering humanity or to know that God has denied us sensibility. At the agony in that fainting voice Anne Dillon's big heart contracted. With an impulsive gesture she flung her arm about his grizzled neck, and they wept together—bitter, bitter tears—while the baby on his knees between them crowed and laughed and gurgled as only happy, healthy babies know how to do.

The old soldier straightened up at last, trying to recover himself. His expression was pitiful—but there was the light of reason in his eyes. He laid his wrinkled hand over the baby's tiny palm, gazing down at it.

"What is her name?" he asked. "What is the little one's name?"

"Agnes would have called it Lucy—for her mother," said Anne in a low voice. She knew the words would cause a fresh sting—but afterward he would feel better. "So when it was baptized I gave it that name."

"Lucy!" he murmured. "Lucy!"

He took her up tenderly, and the touch of the helpless little body shook him from head to foot with strong emotion once more. "Lucy!" he said over and over—thinking perhaps of Agnes, his first-born, and of the love and joy he had felt with the Lucy of his strong manhood kneeling before him with their baby in her arms. Thinking with a heartache of all that had happened —of all the joy, the long, long years of peace and joy—and the sorrow and desolation of the present.

"You have cared for her so long," he said now. "I am an old man—will you keep her for me a little while? I would not know what to do for her."

"You will not take her from me," said Anne in affright.
"I could not think of giving her up—that would be impossible."
She half-extended her arms. "I shall keep her—just as long as you will permit me."

But he did not heed the invitation of those outstretched arms.

"It's the first bit of comfort I've had in months," he said.

"I think she has saved my life, Anne. I think Agnes' baby has saved my life. I felt," and he shuddered, "as if I were going mad. Yes, I will give her to you now—just a moment—"

It was sorrowful. He could not bear to give her; he could not keep her. He followed them to the door; out to the stoop; stood, looking after them, and Anne held the little one up in her arms, and took the baby-hand in hers to wave it in farewell. Thus began the mission of the "very little one," a simple tale when told, and true.

He came back to his small world again, and tried to take an interest in the things around him. But his small world was the Dillon household, where Agnes' baby—the "very little one" among all the little ones, was never out of his arms. Months passed, and the baby grew and throve without a suspicion of the ills that baby flesh is prone to. Although his step had grown quite feeble and his form was shaken and his hair white, he could laugh with the "very little one," and play with her as merrily as any child among them.

"I was in the depths," he said to Father Murphy. "I was down in the depths—without a hope in God, without a hand to cling to, and I was sinking deeper and deeper. Bit by bit the light was dying out. Bit by bit I was learning despair. It must have been Agnes sent me the 'very little one.'"

Father Murphy, as he listened, could well believe it. For it was Miles Lester's first visit to the house of God since his wife's death. He had grown altogether indifferent then; and afterward indifference became a habit. So Father Murphy listened, glad to feel in his own good heart that a little child was accomplishing the great work God had not permitted older and wiser and more learned folk to do. A little child was leading this man to the altar-rail. Not as of old. Not in the faith sufficient to the day, and barely that; not in the faith that was weak and brittle and had wavered when ill-luck befell. But into a newer land—a land of hope—a land of promise.

"Ah!" he said now, in a gentle voice. "God may ask this gift of you, also."

The old man looked at him with mournful eyes.

"I await the event," he said. "It seems scarcely possible I shall be able to keep it with me. His holy will be done."

The "very little one's" mission was accomplished, indeed. Father Murphy put his two hands on Miles Lester's shoulders and looked into his face.

"That is it," he said. "God has His own way to teach us humility. Unless in spirit you be as that babe itself you can not pass the threshold. So, then, you have learned your lesson, Miles Lester. Oh, what a lesson it is to learn, how hard a lesson it is to learn!"

That idea never left Miles Lester's mind—that the "very little one" would go, as well. It added to his desire to keep her with him as much as possible. As soon as her toddling steps could pace beside him, he bent his wrinkled hand to hers. And thus people came to look for them—the old soldier and the little child, walking the narrow pavement that led between the two houses—and they went out of their way to greet him, and to give him kindly words—with greeting and kindly words also for the "very little one."

After a while one other companion began to share these daily walks—a formidable rival indeed for the affection of the baby—so formidable and so forlorn that the grandfather frowned on his too eager attention.

He was first discovered one bright May morning skulking uneasily along by the houses, keeping close to them, and eyeing the two figures with all the lonesomeness of a solitary cur begging to be owned by some one; begging somebody to take possession of him. Lucy discovered him first, of course, and with one fat baby hand waving wildly in his direction, she tried to tear the other from her grandfather's clasp. He looked at the mongrel with disfavor. This was not the sort of pet he would choose for the "very little one. But the "very little one" had chosen.

There were finer and handsomer dogs running at large. Miles Lester would have bought her a big Newfoundland or St. Bernard, and had often tempted her to show an interest in them. But Lucy had seemed afraid—until now. The forlorn mongrel appealed to her baby heart and she made such a fuss over the lonely yellow thing that her grandfather let her have her way—for the time being. It would only be for the time being.

He reckoned without the dog.

He could not be lured or enticed or bought off. He could not be tempted. No bribe could seduce him from his watchfulness. They took him to a neighboring town and "lost" him. But he found his way back again, and was sitting on the Lester doorstep the next morning. Weary, bedraggled, hungry—

But joyous.

Miles Lester became reconciled to the inevitable. The "very little one" could talk now, in lisping, baby syllables, and the affection between the yellow dog and her was so sincere that he thought it better to make him a bit more respectable. So he gave him a bath with his own hands—the little one standing beside him in great glee. Billee was very patient under the novel process. By and by Anne Dillon tied a blue ribbon around his neck. The contrast between the yellow cur and the blue satin ribbon was ludicrous. Only that no one saw anything funny in it since it pleased the "very little one."

Every passing day made her dearer. Every passing day made her stronger. Every passing day saw her stout, firm, little body more erect on her stout, firm, little legs. Billee pranced along beside her. Billee slept at her door all night. Billee was her playmate and her companion.

Treasuring the gift with jealous care, offering it daily to Him who had lent it, has brought another expression to the old soldier's face. His sorrow is not hopeless—rather is it chastened with hope for that great future which is to be his with those he loves. Daily the "very little one" is bringing him to the heights.

So they may be seen—an old man, careless of attire, in slouched hat and well-worn coat; and the little child toddling the paved walk beside him, clinging to the hand he has to stoop to give her.

THE REDEMPTION OF BILL.

BY JEROME HARTE.

THE house was small and smoke-begrimed from the many passing engines in the near-by freight yards, and it had the general aspect of neglect about the vines that clambered wildly over the little side porch and in the uncut grass and weeds of its dooryard. The low picket fence that had once been white was fast going to decay, and the side yard was strewn with chunks of soft coal, uncut black ties from the railroad, and chips about the chopping-block. The lace curtains inside the little front windows, although much darned, were of fine texture and delicate pattern, but many a neighboring housewife displayed in her front windows equally splendid lace curtains—of more pretentious pattern and newness, however—the peace price of a husband's sometime pay-day spree. For the railroaders are big wage-earners and heavy drinkers, God help them!

But the house, in spite of its sameness, had something about it that stamped it as different from its neighbors; and they who lived there were different, too. Inside, mingled with the ordinary cheap furnishings of a trackman's home, was here and there a relic of better days,—a massive carved walnut bedroom-suit set up in the parlor to go with the beautiful old curtains, a priceless marble clock on a shelf much too small for it, a huge, elaborately-carved secretaire in the living-room, a spacious old velvet chair, a few fine family paintings and a rare etching or two upon the low walls. Somehow, if these already seemed foreign to Bill, they went well with Miss Hester, the old aristocrat.

Miss Hester was tall and gaunt, with iron-gray hair and unmistakable haughtiness of carriage. Her everyday calico gown

was short as her neighbors' were, and she worked as hard as they, but she walked as a queen as she toiled. On Sunday she went to Mass in a purple silk of another day, with a long train, and a bit of real lace at her throat. Her silk mitts were darned at the fingers, and her bonnet and parasol were very old. She took little, precise steps, and carried her head in the air as they had taught her to do in an old-time boarding-school, and everybody stared at her. Few knew the old aristocrat. Bill never went to Mass; he hadn't been inside a church in thirty years.

Bill hadn't worked much that summer. He didn't like to work much any summer—or winter. Bill had been the only son of a Southern widow, who had managed to keep a portion of her wealth after the war, and he had received a gentleman's education and had lived as a gentleman,—without work. His sisters, one by one, had married well, but Miss Hester gave up many a worthy lover to stay with her invalid mother and Bill.

God's ways are queer ways, but God's ways are best. While his mother lived, Bill was a good Catholic and a sober fellow. From the day that she was laid in her grave he had turned his back upon his Maker and had resolutely gone upon the downward road. In a way, Miss Hester went with him. Her sister's love and loyalty bespoke no other course.

Bill's curse was drink—and distaste for work. He had drifted into a railroader's precarious life, despite his refinement and superior education, God knows why. He was content to work five days out of ten and to spend what little he earned in drink. Miss Hester clothed him and fed him, and his deadened pride knew no shame of it. He sank gradually but surely to the level of the unlettered men about him,—better men than he were many of them, but unlike him, ignorant of another life; he cursed his fate with blind rage, but he had neither wish nor ambition to rise higher. Miss Hester's daily, hourly prayers might make him a man again, a sober, industrious man, but thirty years had made him irrevocably a railroader, content to go on in a rut and to die in a rut. It is in the atmosphere of these great railroader centers, as those who know too well will tell you, and drink helps.

Bill might be a man again, but a polished Southern gentleman never.

Not that Miss Hester prayed for that. She asked God for but one boon—to bring Bill back to his church.

"If I could see him going to his duty and to Mass once more I'd die content," said poor Miss Hester.

We never know when or how God will answer our prayers. Miss Hester had prayed one prayer for thirty years and had not despaired, and God answered her prayer—at last.

Bill hadn't worked much that summer. Julia, the prettiest and most vivacious of Miss Hester's nieces, had married, and Miss Hester had gone to the wedding and to settle the new home. When she got back Bill was lounging around the yard with a pipe in his mouth. He hadn't worked since she had been gone and he owed every man in town.

In vain Miss Hester coaxed and stormed. Bill said he would never work again. He told her that she could support him or go to a warmer place than Sayre.

Each evening Bill put on a white shirt and a collar and tie, curled his mustache and blacked his boots and sauntered forth. It was a long time before any one dared to tell the old aristocrat that Bill had a girl.

The "girl" was a buxom widow with five small children,—a big, good-hearted soul who kept a little home bakery around the corner, and who managed to keep her children off the street and to buy an occasional gaudy dress for herself. Her husband had left her an insurance, and she was a generous soul. Bill sat around her shop and ate her fat cookies and smiled upon her; when the children had gone to bed they sat together in the hammock. Afterward Bill went and drank until morning. Then he staggered home and slept all day.

Miss Hester had prayed for one thing during thirty years and now she did not vary her prayer. Bill's girl was the last blow to her later years of trouble. She had but one thought: the news must be kept from the rest of the family. Southern pride is very strong. The widow talked with a brogue and in high tones; she

laughed loud, and often went to the grocery store in a calico wrapper. She outraged Miss Hester's fine feelings and sense of decorous behavior, and that Bill meant seriously did not at first enter his sister's head.

August came and Bill suddenly went to work again. He drank, it is true, but he worked every day and dressed up every evening. He smoked cigars instead of a pipe, and got money from Miss Hester to take the widow to the circus. Then the family heard and Miss Hester caught their alarm. But it was too late. The widow and Bill were about to be married.

When Miss Hester trailed her purple silk into church now the congregation turned and stared. The widow was one of them and the old aristocrat was something above and beyond them. Deeper lines had come into her patient face, and sometimes her proud old head drooped as though weary of its very pride.

Then Bill left their little home. He wanted the lace curtains and the clock and the family paintings, but Miss Hester stood her ground and stooped to quarrel with him, to the surprise and amusement of her listening neighbors. Bill went without the coveted furniture and took his trunk to the widow's. That night their marriage notice was printed in the city papers. They had been properly called and married in church, much to Miss Hester's surprise, for Miss Hester had been ill.

The family said Bill had been looking for some one to support him, and they sincerely hoped that the widow would do nothing of the kind. She still kept her little bakery and worked late and early, but Bill worked too, every day, and some one told the old aristocrat that he had quit drinking.

Miss Hester's niece came to take care of her, and her niece's husband ran down Sundays to try his unaccustomed hand at the woodpile and to coax Miss Hester to come and live with them. Julia had married a rich man and there was a welcome place in their luxurious home for Miss Hester.

It was some weeks before she got out to Mass, and then her purple silk hung looser on her shrunken frame; she was a little feeble and stooped, but she was haughty still. Just before Mass began a ripple ran through the congregation. Miss Hester looked up from her beads. The widow, resplendent in a red gown, went sailing up the middle aisle, her five children in spick and span frocks and suits followed her on a dog-run, and Bill brought up the rear. He was clean-shaven and had on a new black suit. Miss Hester seemed turned to stone. Her eyes glittered and a feverish spot came into either cheek, but she sat quite motionless.

It was early Mass and the widow and Bill went to communion. There was a new look on Bill's face. Miss Hester had seen such a look on his face when it had been young and fresh and he had helped his aged mother back from the communion rail. Miss Hester's heart was beating fast. When she got home, she took off her bonnet and laid it on the table. The low rooms looked strange to her, and the noises of the giant engines in the yard fell upon her ears with a new clamor. There was an unanswered letter from Julia's husband on the secretaire. She took it up and read it again mechanically. It struck the vulnerable spot of Miss Hester's character-her unselfishness. It said among other things, in its teasing way, that Julia couldn't drive down to the office at night to meet him because she had to stay and watch the cook so that worthy wouldn't put too much butter in the pies! If Miss Hester would only see her duty and come and watch the cook-

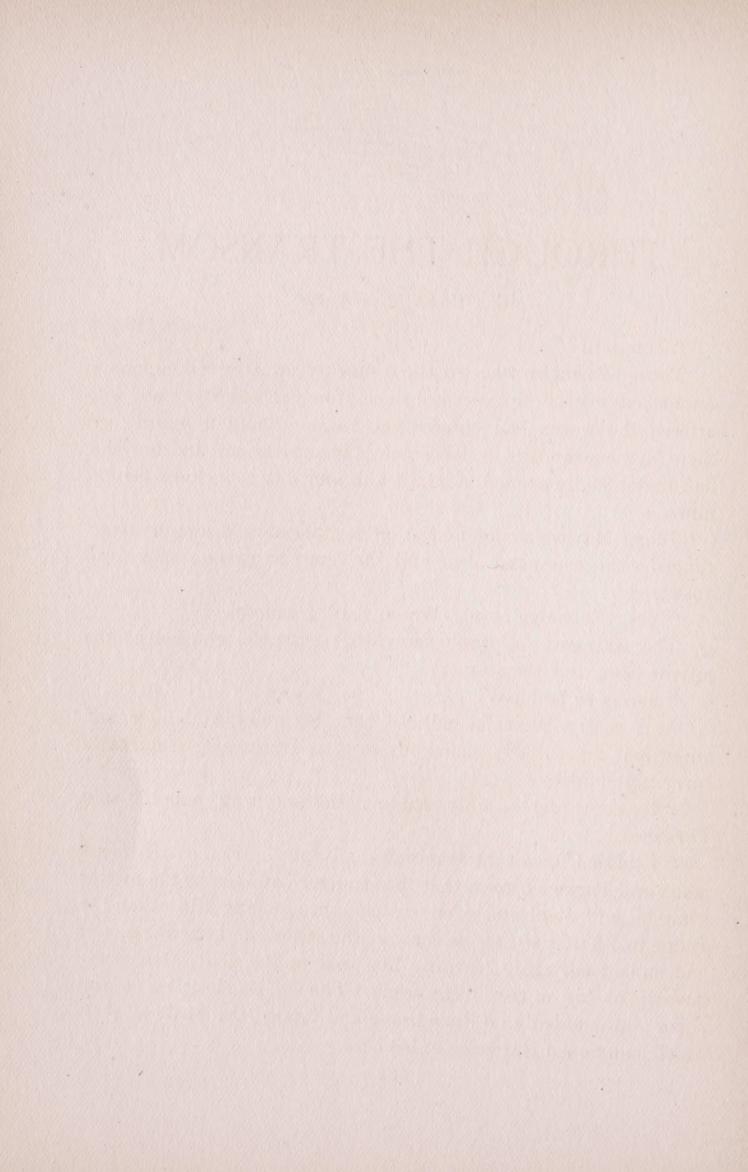
Miss Hester went to the door. A boy was passing, his new store shoes making a painful creaking sound. It was the widow's oldest boy. She called him.

"Mike," she said, "come here."

Mike came gingerly: he was much in awe of the old aristocrat.

"Mike," she said, "will you please tell Billie—and your mother—that if they will come over, they can have the clock and the lace curtains?"

Mike's eyes were like saucers. The marble clock, lace curtains! "I'm going to Julia's to-morrow," said Miss Hester. A great peace and content had settled over her pale face. God's ways are good ways and He answers our prayers in His own good time.



THROUGH THE TRANSOM.

BY JULIA C. WALSH.

"JUDGE in?"

Young Parmelee wheeled about quickly in his revolving chair, astonished at the unexpected voice, for the elderly man who uttered the words had entered the room without a sound; yet there he was, standing in the center of the apartment, and the door had undoubtedly opened to admit him and was now closed behind him.

Judge Mayben's confidential clerk glanced at a mirror so arranged as to command a view of the inner or private office, and answered:

"Yes, the Judge is in. Whom shall I announce?"

The stranger, following the clerk's example, glanced at the mirror also, and then said:

"Seems to be busy."

And young Parmelee noticed that his voice, while low and quiet, had a peculiarly melodious ring, and possessed remarkable carrying qualities.

"I believe he is only reading the morning paper," said

Parmelee.

"I think I'll wait a few minutes, anyhow," said the soft-voiced man; and Parmelee knew that the stranger had seen in the mirror what he had seen, and what struck him as being odd: that the Judge had half risen in his chair at the sound of their voices, and had sunk back again, turning his back to the door, and consequently to the mirror. He seemed now to be absorbed in the paper; but suddenly he leaned over and tapped the small call-bell which summoned Parmelee to his desk.

"Dismiss that man," he said, in a low voice, but with undoubted decision. "I heard his voice, and know who he is, and can guess the nature of his errand. I will not see him. Get rid of him some way, but don't let him in here. Close the door."

The order was so peremptory that there was nothing to be said, and Parmelee did as he was bid without a word; but as he closed the door he noted that the Judge's words had reached the man in waiting, whose ears were probably as sharp as his voice was gentle, and that the man looked positively disappointed. He glanced up, however, and seeing that the wide transom over the door was open, he said:

"If you don't mind, I'll sit down a minute," and Parmelee

waved him to a chair.

He took it; and as Parmelee cast a hasty but scrutinizing glance at him and tried to classify him, a habit he was cultivating professionally, he realized that he had a difficult and non-committal subject to deal with.

"I'm from the Judge's town," said the stranger.

"Are you? An old friend, I suppose?"

"H'm! well, yes—and no. He did me a mighty good turn once—more than once—and I'll never forget it; but we weren't just on a par down home." Then, after a brief pause:

"Does the Judge ever go down there?"

"I think not; at least, he has not gone for a number of years."

"Still holds on to the old homestead, I suppose?"

"I believe so."

The man half turned away his face, and gazed at the floor, nodding his head thoughtfully, as though revolving something in his mind. He turned again suddenly and surprised young Parmelee's intent look, which he returned for a brief instant; and then, smiling as though understandingly, he said:

"An odd thing happened down there a couple of days ago. Did the Judge ever tell you about the Hunart Bank robbery?"

Parmelee shook his head negatively.

"No, I suppose he wouldn't. It happened about forty years

ago; but I'll bet he's not forgotten it. Hunart was his mother's name, you know, and the bank was in the block of property that she got from her father. Partly on that account, and partly because some of the Hunart as well as the Mayben money was running the concern, it was called the Hunart Bank. The Judge was a young fellow, just admitted to the bar, when the robbery occurred; but his father had been dead some years, and he was managing the estate for his mother. He was the only child."

Parmelee wondered whether the low voice of the speaker carried over the transom, or whether the Judge's interest in the paper was more absorbing than the recital of his fellow-townsman. The stranger went on:

"The bank was on one corner of the Hunart property, just near where the main street of the village crossed the creek; the homestead, where the Judge and his mother lived then, stood about forty or fifty rods back from the road."

Here the stranger paused and seemed to seek inspiration out of the window, but presently he continued, not fluently, but as if choosing his words:

"Well, there was a young fellow in the town—a fine young fellow he was, too—and I happen to know that he'd got into difficulties concerning some money that didn't belong to him. And there was another young fellow there that afterward turned out to be a regular penitentiary bird. Jackson Caskey was his name. Ever hear of him?"

Parmelee said he had not.

"Probably not, probably not. He went West a good many years ago, but I understand that he came back not long since. The Judge was good to him, too. Because they'd been boys together and playmates, the Judge got him out of trouble several times; or, at least, he tried to, but he didn't always succeed. All us folks down in the old town used to say that it was just like the Judge to stick to his old friends like that.

"Well, this young fellow that I spoke of first, he got into a tight place, as I told you, and finally he induced Jackson Caskey

to rob the bank for him, or, rather, they were to rob it together. They laid their plans to rob the safe, and then blow it up on a certain night, and Jackson Caskey said he knew all about how it ought to be done. So he went away and got a lot of powder, and brought it back and stored it in a safe place to use when they wanted it. Then when the time came to use it the other young man—the one that I spoke of first—played sick for a couple of days and stayed at home so he wouldn't be suspected, and when the night came he slipped out of his house, and he and Jackson Caskey managed to get into the bank.

"Now, Caskey said he knew all about blowing up the safe; but he didn't, because he had never been in such a job before. But, anyhow, he fixed up a blast, and when it was ready he lit the fuse, and he and the other fellow got out of the building and each went home. Well, sir, when that charge exploded it wrecked the whole building; the safe was blown out through the back of the bank, and the roof came down in splinters on the wreck of the walls. It woke the whole town—"

"But what about the money," inquired Parmelee. "Didn't the thieves go back for it?"

"Oh, they took that away with them. They knew how to open the safe all right. They only blew it up for a blind. The bank lost about seventeen thousand dollars, besides the Hunart building; that was a total wreck. Of course the affair made a great sensation. Everybody in the village went to see the blown-up building, and nothing else was talked of that day and days afterward.

"The next day the young fellow that had started the plot sent word to Jackson Caskey that his watch-chain was broken and part of it was missing, and if it was found in the wreck of the bank of course it would convict him, as it was of a peculiar pattern and well known, and he wanted Caskey to go and search around in the ruins and see if he couldn't find it.

"Well, Caskey was a new hand at the business, and he was just fool enough to do it; and in that way he was suspected, and finally arrested for the crime. That was the first time Judge Mayben defended him. He tried to establish an alibi, but they couldn't quite make it, but, anyhow, the lawyer made a strong plea, on account of Caskey's youth and the fact that he had never before been in serious trouble, and he got him off with a comparatively light sentence. Folks down in the old town said it was mighty elever of young Mayben, considering all he lost, because the money never was turned up; but that's the kind of a man the Judge always was—always wanting to make the best of everybody and sticking to his old friends and defending them for nothing. He said he just knew in his mind that Jackson Caskey was somebody's tool in the matter; but Caskey wouldn't peach, and the other fellow was never even suspected."

"What became of him?" asked Parmelee.

"Oh, he left our village after some years, and set up in a big city. Did mighty well, too, and lived straight and is straight. He never was a bad fellow at heart. He just got desperate that time, and—well, maybe he thought he had some claim on the bank; and maybe he had. Anyhow, he's got a reputation to-day second to none for honesty and honor. I fancy his experience at that time was a lesson that gave him the very moral shock that he needed.

"But that's not the end of the story. The Hunart Bank was never rebuilt. At the time, the family didn't have the ready money to do it; and some years afterward, when the old lady died, the Judge concluded he'd leave our town and get into the big world; and so the heaps of brick and mortar lay there, and after a while weeds and vines grew up all over them and nothing was ever done with the place. But last week we had a big storm down there—the biggest one in half a century, some of the old people said; the whole country was flooded, and the creeks were out of their banks in no time. And, sir, what do you think? That little creek of ours got dammed up at the bridge, and the current turned and ran through the ruins of the old Hunart Bank and washed away a lot of the stuff; and the next day some children that were digging around turned up that piece of broken watch-chain. Of course, some of the old folks saw it, and recognized it, and

they're beginning to put two and two together, as the saying is, and suspect the right man. Now they say they're going to find out if he still has the other piece of that broken watch-chain. Of course, if he has, and they find it out, that convicts him; but, if he's smart, he'll get rid of it."

"Then why don't you warn him? Why don't you tell him

so?" asked Judge Mayben's confidential clerk.

"That's what I wanted to do," answered the soft-voiced man, but I haven't had a chance. Now, if that piece of chain was found on me, they'd think—"

The soft-voiced man was rudely interrupted, for young Parmelee's tilted chair came down to normal level with a click, and he said, sharply:

"You! who are you, anyhow, and how do you happen to know so much about the man that wasn't suspected? Are you—"

The name was never spoken. In the inner office there was the harsh rustle of newspaper, and then the dull, heavy sound of a fall, and young Parmelee sprang toward the door and threw it open. Judge Mayben lay at full length face downward on the floor. Parmelee was dazed for an instant, and in that instant the soft-voiced man had pushed past him and reached the prostrate form, turned it over, and placed his hand on the heart.

"Fainted," he said, tersely. "He'll be all right in a minute. Get some water."

He spoke as one in command, and young Parmelee obeyed him mechanically. When the confidential clerk returned to the room the soft-voiced man was rising from his knees, and he said again:

"He'll be all right in a minute. I wouldn't call any one if I was you. I guess I'll go. I reckon the Judge doesn't care to see me. Tell him it's all right."

He stooped and picked up something from the floor that gleamed brightly. It was a small length of broken watch-chain of peculiar pattern.

The outer door opened as softly for his exit as for his entrance, and the soft-voiced man was gone.

GRANDMAMMA.

BY MARY BOYLE O'REILLY.

OUTSIDE the wind blew flurries of snow against the panes. Within the fat china mandarin on the center-table blinked at the glowing fire in the old-fashioned Franklin. Before him, on the sofa, lay a dozen knobby bundles, tied with scarlet ribbons.

Grandmamma knew it was a sad waste of good ribbon, but she had heard such was the fashion. Since she must tie up her gifts with ribbons she would have none but the best. Perhaps the Girls would make use of it later for hair bows.

It was cozy in the quiet warmth of the prim, old room, and Grandmamma's head nodded: the knitting slipped from her knee, and the spectacles from her relaxed forefinger. The fat china mandarin nodded also, as he leered from the winking fire to the perky scarlet bows. He had been dusted three times that day, and his squat figure fairly shone.

The door-bell pealed through the house, and Grandmamma—waking with a start—felt nervously for her cane. The Girls had come at last, and had almost caught her napping! She could hear footsteps approaching from the kitchen; then the door was opened and a deep voice pronounced her name. So it was not the Girls after all! Next moment Hannah brought in a package gay with holly. "Another!" cried Grandmamma, her tender mouth tremulous, "do they think I am a child that they send me so many presents? A book from Mrs. Waters? How very kind of her! Hand me my glasses, Hannah. Dear me! A novel by a Frenchman! Well, at least I am too old to be hurt by such reading."

Left alone the old lady laid the book on the table and covered

it with another. She had her opinion of French novels. Then her glance, falling complacently on the little heap on the sofa, reminded her to seek the window.

"I thought the Girls would be here before this. Poor children, how busy they must be. And such a disagreeable day, too. I hope Sallie remembered to wear her overshoes and Elizabeth her fur tippet. Why, here is John!"

Next minute John's sturdy stamp sounded from the door rug, the big, silent son-in-law whom Grandmamma had learned to love.

"Have Mary and the girls been here?" he asked. "No? That is curious. They spoke of coming early, and so getting home in time to dress for Madge Wilkins' dance. Christmas Eve is a home night, I think, but Mary is ambitious for the children, and girls will be girls, mother." His warm smile encompassed her bowed figure as he felt boyishly through his pockets. "Just a trifle to say a happy Christmas to you, mother. Found it in the jeweler's. I thought it seemed to suit you. Here, let me open it for you, dear."

Her brown eyes grew misty as she looked at the exquisite gift he had brought her. "Pin it on my collar," she said, "my dear boy." He obeyed so awkwardly that they both found in laughter an excuse for the tears in their eyes. Then he sat by her armchair, telling with quiet gratitude of the successes the last year had brought him, and of his Christmas plans for his work-people.

"By another year you will be a rich man, please God," she told him; and in the sympathetic silence each wondered what another year would bring to her.

When he was gone she sat alone thinking the long thoughts of age, smiling half-sadly as she fingered his gift.

"John is lonely, too," she told herself, "and he is working beyond his strength. Will Mary never realize that she is wasting his life and her own? Her old age will have few precious memories of love and peace to dwell upon."

A carriage rumbled heavily as it rounded the street corner.

"The Girls!" cried Grandmamma, rising in her excitement. "The dear, extravagant children. Now where is my purse?"

The carriage drew up at the curb, and out stepped a sweet-faced girl, carrying a pot of flowers.

"I wanted to bring you some hyacinths of my own raising," she said. "Of course Sallie and Elizabeth have been here before me to wish you a happy Christmas, but then I am only an adopted grandchild," and she smiled affectionately into the sweet old face upraised to meet her lips. "Such beautiful things as every one has sent me," she continued, "me, of all people!" and while Grandmamma held her chilled hands to warm them she ran over the tale of her gifts.

"And why should they not, my dear child? Are you not always doing for others? What have you now piled up on that front seat?"

"Mostly mittens, and turkeys, and fixings," laughed the girl. "Mother's, you know. She has so many friends who are—not well off."

"God bless you both," said Grandma, kissing her good-by.
"Your mother should be a happy woman."

Left alone she rearranged the parcels on the sofa, sighing softly as she straightened the flaunting ribbons. In that little heap lay the work of many happy weeks: gay slippers and fleecy evening hoods, in which jeweled gifts were hidden by way of a surprise. Grandmamma did not let herself think which part of her gifts would prove most welcome. A fortnight ago she had tied the scarlet bows; since daybreak she had been up and dressed in her best silk, waiting for the Girls. Now it was almost too late for them to come. Her kind mouth drooped like a child's in her disappointment.

"By next Christmas John will have retired from business," she thought, "and the Girls will perhaps be betrothed, while I—"

Again the bell rang loudly, an impatient, discordant jangle. Grandmamma stood leaning on her cane, listening intently, prepared for disappointment.

"Why, it is Mary's voice," she cried happily.

"Merry Christmas, mother," said the daughter who entered, pausing to let her bundles slip into Hannah's waiting hands.

"Dear me, how cozy you are here, and what a horrid day it has been. Just rush, rush! Christmas has become a positive nuisance. Another year I shall give only to those who give to me. All those presents for us! How generous you are, mother. The girls will be delighted. They were so worn out with running about to-day that I would not let them come with me. Sallie was quite vexed not to see you. I made them both lie down to rest."

"I am very glad that you did, dear, and that they were so sensible. At first I was afraid" (with a wistful little smile)

"that they had forgotten to come."

A RECORD BREAKER.

BY S. M. O'MALLEY.

THE Allegro club room was empty, save for three men, who were lounging about one of the tables.

"We must be represented at the International Contests," said one of the men firmly.

"And I repeat," exclaimed another, "where is the man to represent us?"

The third arose with a laugh. "I shall begin a search for him," he said, "while you gentlemen settle the question satisfactorily between yourselves."

"Stay, stay!" called out both men, but the athletic figure went rapidly toward the door, answering with a negative shake of the head. The remaining men stared after him for a moment. Then the older of the two said: "Why not Hermann?"

The other took his cigar from his mouth, and, with a slight puff, seemed to blow the idea away.

"Hermann would have to work hard to reach success, and that he will not do. He has ruined himself. When we were at college together he was the trimmest fellow I knew, and I liked to see him winning in the games. You know I could only look on," he glanced down at a twisted and shortened limb, "and in his classes he was phenomenal. I couldn't swear it, but I believe he has as fine an education as the Archbishop, and you know he is reckoned a giant in intellect."

- "Related some way, are they not?"
- "Yes, Hermann is his nephew."
- "Why does Hermann act as he does? You'd never know he had an idea above the latest gossip or mixing a new drink."

"It all commenced years ago, when that report went round that Hermann, Sr., had failed for all he was worth. You remember that young Hermann was all attention to a handsome Miss Montserro who was here that year. When the news came out, she failed to recognize him, I have understood, and he became moody and bitter, dropped away from all his old ambitions, and cared very little for any of his old likings. Even the Archbishop fails to influence him. I doubt if he has made his Easter duties in three years."

"But Hermann is rich; did the old gentleman lose his money?"

"Oh, I forgot to say that the report was a joke—something that grew out of Hermann's indignant denial of an assertion that Miss Montserro loved the money, not Hermann."

"Then you think he could not stand the work for the contest?"

"He could stand it, but he will not do it. He is too indifferent, too cynical, to make the effort. Besides, he drinks heavily, and I am afraid he is on the downward course."

The men were speaking without reserve, for they supposed they were alone in the building, but at this moment a small figure, hand-somely gowned, passed under the window, up the steps, and into the club room.

"Good morning, Colonel Belmont, and Mr. Travers; this is unexpected. I am looking for a book Mr. Hermann left here. He said I could have it if I cared to stop for it."

The gentlemen hastened into a lively conversation, mentally wondering if she had heard their words.

"I hope she did not overhear us," laughed Travers. "She can say just what she thinks, and I would not like to fall into her hands."

"She is a great friend of Hermann's, too," sighed Colonel Belmont. "Why is it that a careless scamp like Hermann has so many good women for friends?"

Travers shrugged his shoulders. "It's a pity she is so poor, or that he could not love her; better than Miss Montserro, I think."

"And I think so," replied the colonel, with so much fervor that Travers looked at him quizzically.

The trim little woman they were discussing had passed out of

their range of vision, so they did not know that she had been joined by Hermann, nor that she was talking to him earnestly.

* * * * *

"We have been friends and schoolmates," she was saying, "and while you will always have friends if your money lasts, yet you are not laying up treasures in heaven. If you do no harm, you are certainly doing no good." She paused, and looked at him half discouraged. "Do not be angry. Yet I could well afford to lose your friendship if I could only say the word that would arouse you to a life of active good." Again she paused, but Hermann walked on steadily without a word. With downcast eyes she considered the subject, and then tried another plan.

"I must tell you something; I overheard it, and I shall prepare you. The Allegro club will ask you to represent it at the International Contests this year, and you can not, you must not, refuse. Nor can you win without hard work, but I am going to ask you to try. It is a favor I ask for your good. Here," as they neared the cathedral, "I shall say a prayer for your success. Will you join me?"

Hesitatingly he followed, kneeling as if in a dream, snatches of half-forgotten prayers hurrying through his bewildered brain, until, with a start, he found himself alone, his companion having slipped away.

"How like Mary Bauer," he laughed as he reached the street. "Some way I can't content myself. I'll go down to the Armory and drill with the boys. That will be a beginning. Perhaps a little military discipline will do me good."

After this he did not see any of the club members for several weeks. Meanwhile Mary Bauer had been at work, and the club men were only waiting to see Hermann to urge on him the subject of the International Contests.

"Where is Hermann?" was a common question.

Then it was rumored that Miss Montserro was in town, and some of Hermann's friends supposed he had left the city to avoid meeting her. There was some talk of giving up all idea of the contest and settling down to a lecture course, when the startling

news came that Hermann had met with an accident, and was seriously injured, but that he had saved Miss Montserro's life, and that she was devoted in her care of him. Later details told how he had been standing in front of the Armory, ready for military drill, when a runaway horse, dashing along the street, claimed his attention. Rushing after the horse and carriage, he overtook them near a dangerous turn, where a rocky bank and a sweep of trees promised a fatal crash; with a bound he caught the horse's bit and twisted it against his mouth, bringing him to an uneasy standstill.

Much to Hermann's surprise, Miss Montserro was in the carriage, and she chose to be very sweet and gracious, passing over all intervening years of neglect with an indifference that amazed Hermann.

The little strain to his muscles, a bruise or two and a minute of deadly pallor she magnified into dire disaster, fussing over him until he sighed thankfully when she left him to a gentle-faced nurse. Undoubtedly Miss Montserro was as pretty as ever, and she was his ideal, but ideals make one nervous sometimes.

Much to his surprise, Mary Bauer came, too, looking at him critically.

"Oh! you're all right," she exclaimed, much relieved. "Don't forget the contest," and off she went, after placing a spray of hyacinths on his pillow.

"My favorite," he said delightedly. "I wonder if she likes it, too?"

To some club friends, who came up later, he said: "I'll be in trim. I've been hard at work, and I never felt so much as if I wanted to win."

"I guess Travers or Belmont spoke to him and left us in the dark about it," they said. "It's a fine thing that Miss Montserro came. He'll take an interest in life again."

Finally the news was all over the city, the papers took it up and interest in the contests ran high. One of their own was to enter the lists, and he must be upheld and made much of. "Hermann is all right," was a password at the club. Mary Bauer entered the cathedral every evening to pray for her friend and his success,

placing a spray of her favorite white flower across the Blessed Mother's feet to gain her intercession for Hermann.

Miss Montserro haunted Herrmann. He was seen in her carriage on several occasions; finally his colors, white and lavender, appeared on her whip. Soon they were taken up by all his friends, but the honor of introducing them was credited to Miss Montserro.

Hermann did not meet Mary Bauer again until a few days before the event. He said, half sadly, "Will you come? I shall need you if I succeed or fail."

"Fail!" murmured Mary, a little overcome. "You must not think of failing."

The day came, serene and cool, just the kind of weather that tingles the nerves deliciously. The audience was large and enthusiastic, many trained athletes being present, and much in evidence on coat lapels and as shoulder knots floated Hermann's white and lavender. Miss Montserro was conspicuous with her tally-ho. She was dressed in white and lavender, with bows of the same colors at her horses' ears; very brilliant she looked, and the friends who understood thought Hermann a lucky man.

The wonderful hammer-throwing worked the audience into an appreciative mood, and when the time came for the running contest a stir like the rustling of a distant wind went over the crowd; then came a silence, and all eyes were turned toward the starting-point. At the crack of the pistol Hermann sprang forward, distancing all his companions in the bound.

"Hermann!" roared the crowd, while here and there scattering voices called out, "Bartley! Hannagan!"

To Mary, who was fearful, it seemed that Hermann was weakening. She stood up in her trap, her face white as death, her hands clasped. To Hermann, who looked that way, her face was a prayer. He had seen Miss Montserro, and some of the old cynicism came to him. Why should he want to win this race, what did he care who carried away the victor's laurels? He slackened his speed until he caught sight of Mary's face.

"I can't disappoint that!" he thought. He gave Mary a bright look, and forged ahead, winning the race, while the audience roared

"Hermann!" over and over; the bands shrieked and flags and streamers of lavender and white blossomed out all over the field.

Miss Montserro felt a trifle angry. She had followed Hermann's look, and she had seen the sweet little woman in the unpretentious little trap. Nor did she feel better when Hermann climbed into it, with an air of possession that went bitterly to her heart, and one of the club men, who was proof against Miss Montserro's charms, looked after Mary and Hermann with an amazed look, saying: "Well, that is a record breaker."

CHILOMACON.

BY KATHARINE JENKINS.

In the far away days when the now thickly populated State of Maryland was a poor struggling colony, with more or less poverty-stricken settlements scattered along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its confluent rivers, our holy faith was the one priceless treasure possessed by the majority of the settlers. Some few there were who had joined the colony who were not Catholics. These were made welcome and given the freedom of belief and practice which the poor oppressed Catholics themselves hoped always to enjoy in this home of their adoption. Alas! their hope was futile; but of that sad time we need not think, for our story is of the happier days.

About fifteen miles south of where now stands our proud national capitol, the Piscataways, a gentle, hospitable tribe of Indians, had their capital which they called Kittamaqundi. Their king was Chilomacon, a chief of great power and authority, who was respected, admired, and feared by all the neighboring tribes. What Chilomacon did, all the other chiefs would try to do; and knowing this, it was no small solace to the hearts of the missionaries, Fathers White and Altham, when they found him so ready to listen to the sacred truths of the Christian religion. At a general meeting of his tribe and in the presence of several chiefs and some English settlers, Chilomacon declared his determination to adjure his old superstitions, and with his queen and family to be received into the true fold. The day for their reception and baptism was fixed for July 5, 1640. Fathers White and Altham, the governor, and many of the English colonists were to be pres-

ent, and great preparations were being made by the Indians for

the auspicious event.

A few miles from Kittamaqundi, a small Protestant colony from Virginia had been established, and among their number was a family named Webster. The family consisted of the husband, wife, and Clarence, the eight year old son. There was no school for Clarence to attend, and his parents were too busy trying to build up their new home to give him much attention. So he was left to play with the other children in the settlement or to wander off into the sweet pine woods just as his fancy dictated. Clarence was a delicate, dreamy child, a poet in embryo, possessing all the sensitiveness and keen perceptions with which such natures are endowed. The woods with their ever varying lights and shadows were his delight and never-failing source of amusement.

Very early one morning he wandered off, hatless and happy, toward this beloved retreat. As he penetrated farther and farther into the dense thicket, he lost all sense of time and place. The land of enchantment lay before him, and that he was miles from home, alone, and nearing the village of the fierce-looking Piscataways, never daunted this little pioneer. Gentle and shrinking as he was, fear was generally unknown to him. Now the only feeling was one of fatigue. Overcome by this, the child fell on the soft velvety moss at the foot of an ancient cedar that looked as if it could tell the history of the world, so old and venerable it seemed, and went fast asleep. How long he slept he did not know, but suddenly he awoke to find a tall, majestic Indian standing over him, gazing down most kindly. The Indian was in full regalia. On his head was a high coronet of eagle feathers; strings upon strings of gay beads were around his neck; a manytinted striped blanket hung over his shoulders, and a fringe of feathers bordered the bottom of his coat, which looked almost like a dress. His moccasins were of leather, heavily worked in bright colored designs. Altogether he was the most picturesque figure one could imagine. All this finery was the gift of the missionaries, but, of course, the boy did not realize that. Clarence

knew at once that this was the famous King of the Piscataways whom he had long been so anxious to see. Jumping up, he made the very best bow he could muster, and not knowing a word of the chief's language, all he could do was to say as respectfully as possible while he was making his bow, "Chilomacon!"

In very broken, and Clarence thought very funny English, the great chief asked the boy his name.

"Clarence Webster, and I live at the new settlement beyond the woods," answered Clarence.

The Indian gave a sort of grunt. Clarence was beginning to feel just a wee bit afraid, but Chilomacon looked so kind, and seemed to come so near to smiling that the little fellow took heart again and gave himself up to enjoying the novel experience. Speech between the two was impossible, but somehow Chilomacon made Clarence understand that there was going to be a great feast that morning in Kittamaqundi, and that he was invited. He thought he ought to run home and tell his mother, but he couldn't make the king understand this, and he was afraid of displeasing him. And so it came to pass that the great King Chilomacon walked into his capital holding a fair-haired, blue-eyed little English boy by the hand, much to the amazement of his queen and family, and to the amusement of the saintly old missionary, Father Andrew White.

Clarence's delight knew no bounds when he saw so many white faces and heard the familiar English tongue; for, as brave as he was, he could not but feel a little quiver of fear creep over him at the thought of going alone into the Indian capital. But all fear vanished and gave way to astonishment and unalloyed pleasure as the wonderful day went on. It was the great day in Chilomacon's life; the day when he and his wife and family, his principal councillors and many of his tribe were baptized and received into the true fold.

A chapel made in Indian fashion, of the bark of trees, had been built expressly for the occasion. An altar had also been erected and decorated by the chief's daughter and her maidens. The rude font at which the stain of original sin was to be washed away by the regenerating water of Baptism, was wreathed and garlanded with the sweetest flowers, ferns and greens the woods could supply. And where can more beautiful greens be found, even in our day, than in the sweet-smelling pine woods of Maryland?

To the little English Protestant boy the scene was indeed one of enchantment; and when the ceremonies were over, and the Indians, the colonists, and the Fathers had joined in singing "The song of the Lord in a strange land" the child's heart was stirred to its utmost depths.

With all the ardor of his poetic nature, he pushed forward through the crowd, and reaching the two priests, he begged that he, too, might be allowed to belong to "the dear Lord."

"If these little Indian children are His, why may not I be?" he asked.

Father White smiled, yet with tears in his eyes, as the child pleaded for Baptism. Caressing him tenderly, he said:

"My child, I can not baptize you without your parents' consent. But I leave you in the king's care, and he will instruct you. When I come again, which, please God, will be soon, I hope both you and your parents will be ready for Baptism."

Clarence turned to Chilomacon for comfort, and seeing that the king was holding out his hands, the boy went to him.

"I teach you all I know, an' the Great Chief He will-"

"Make you all His children," added Father White. Laying his hands on Clarence's tumbled curls, and making the sign of the cross on his forehead, he said,

"May God bless Chilomacon's first convert."

When the Fathers had gone and the great day was drawing to its close, Chilomacon again took Clarence by the hand to walk with him back through the woods to his home. His councillors wanted him to send the child by some trusty messenger.

"No, the Father left him in my care, and I am to lead him to Christ. He is mine," answered the chief. Chilomacon had been baptized Charles, his wife, Mary, and his daughter, Anne; but to Clarence he was always the King Chilomacon, his ideal of all that was majestic and fascinating.

As the Chief and child walked through the woods in the deepening twilight, speech, which had seemed so impossible in the early morning, came to both these innocent souls, the king just reborn in Baptism, and the boy craving to be admitted to the household of the Father.

Clarence eagerly listened, and plied the king with questions, and it was with genuine regret that he saw the lights in the settlement twinkling in the darkness.

The day had been one of such intense excitement that after the one first thought that he ought to tell his mother, he had forgotten all about home. He saw how selfish he had been when he found his mother in tears and his father grave and anxious. They had searched for him for hours, but of course, had gone in the wrong direction. Well, it was a happy meeting, and Chilomacon stood by an interested spectator.

The Websters begged him to remain with them for the night, but their hot cabin had no charms for this son of the open wilderness. After a few dignified words, he drew his blanket around him and walked away. Clarence stood and looked after him till he was lost in the woods. Then he burst into tears.

"He is the most beautiful man on earth, and he is going to teach me to be one of God's children," he sobbed.

Cuddled up in his mother's arms he little by little told the story of the wonderful day, and ended by announcing that when Father White next came they were all to be baptized. The father and mother laughingly gave their consent to the over-wrought child, little thinking that he would hold them to the promise, and the boy went to sleep happy.

The next morning found the little zealot eager to set off for Kittamaqundi for his first catechism lesson, and so great was his perseverance and so edifying the piety of the Catholic Indians that Chilomacon soon found all his English neighbors as eager for the truth as Clarence himself. And it was a great happiness for Father White on his next visit to find not only Clarence and his parents but also quite a number of their fellow colonists anxious to be received into the Church.

Chilomacon died a few years after, and as the years sped on and the eagerness for gain took more and more hold on the land, the poor Indians were pushed farther and farther away, until finally the once proud tribe of Piscataways was obliterated.

Of them we can truly say that

"their cone-like cabins
That clustered o'er the vale,
Have fled away like wither'd leaves
Before the autumn gale."

But the memory of Chilomacon, the "gentle, interesting savage," as he is called, lives, and one of his monuments is the faith of the Webster family. Clarence's grandchildren many times removed hold it as their proud boast that Chilomacon, the great king, stood godfather for the first Clarence Webster.

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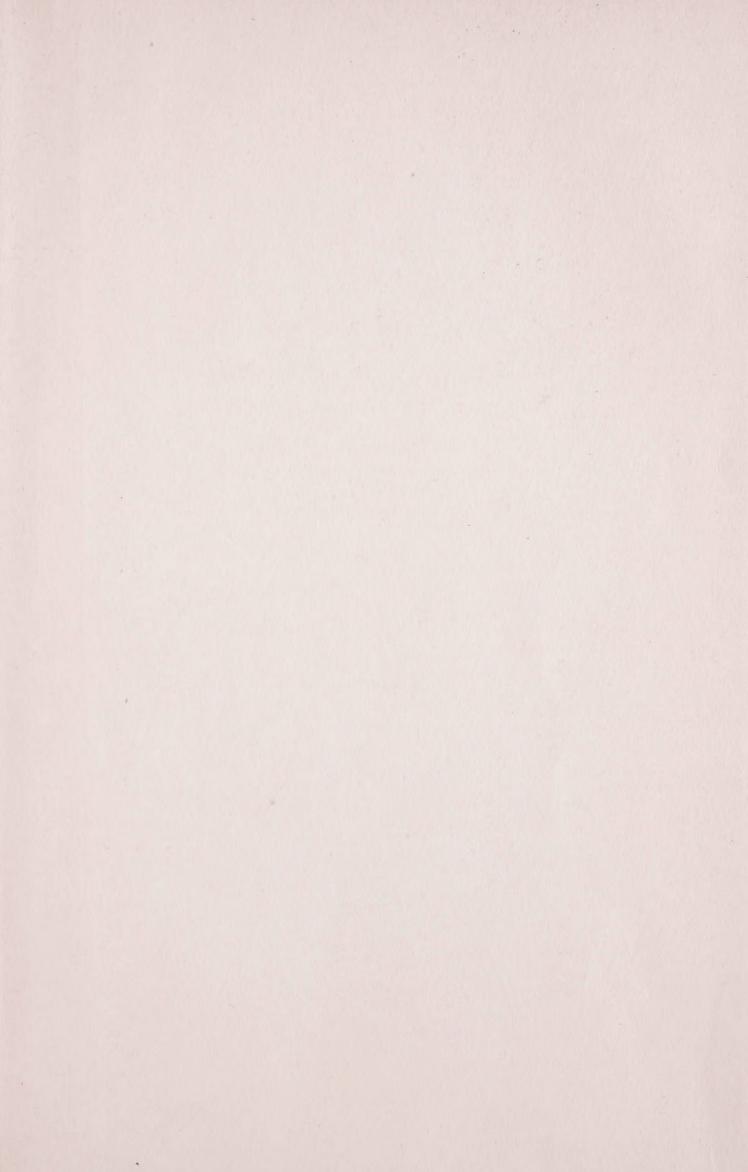
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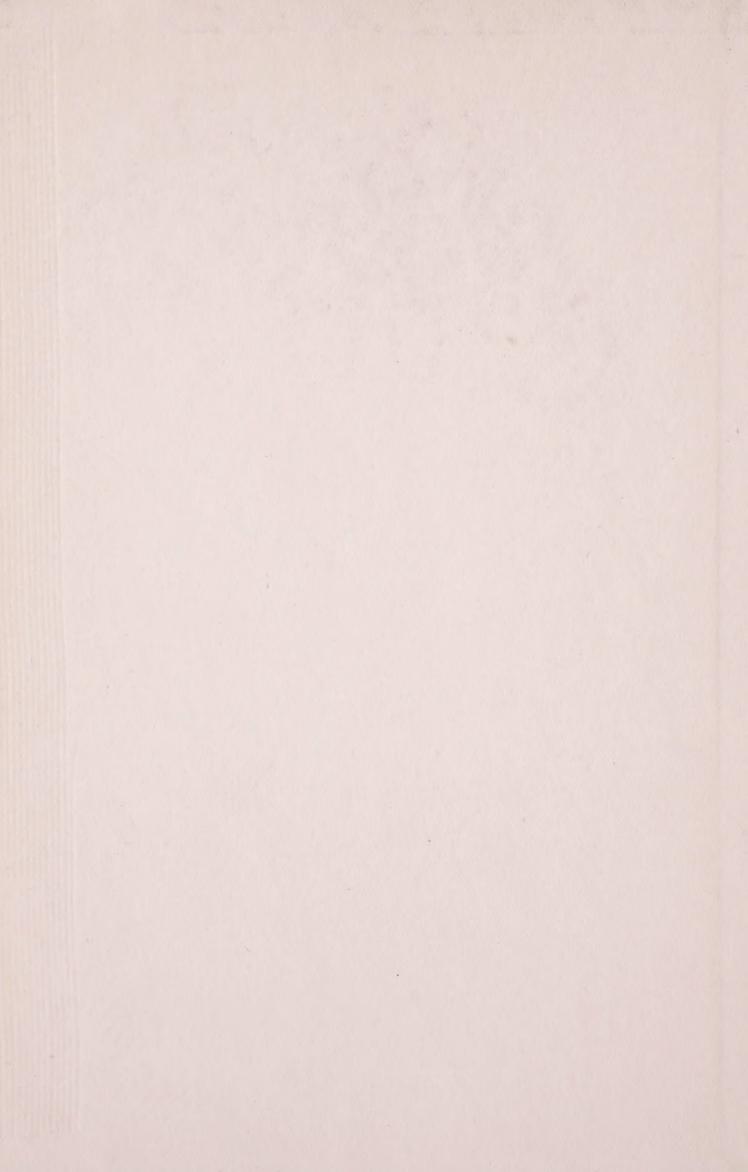
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